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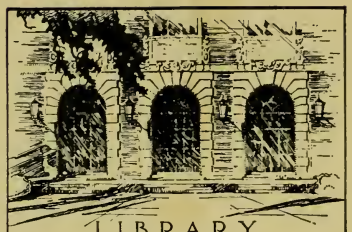

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BY CHARLES ROWCROFT,

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ON

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"This is an able and interesting book. The author has the first great requisite in fiction—a knowledge of the life he undertakes to describe; and his matter is solid and real. The early struggles of a settler and the social system in a penal colony are a fresh subject, and possess more attraction from their novelty than equal or greater powers might attain on an 'historical' or 'fashionable' theme.——The main substance of the book, and the more interesting parts of it, are the striking incidents of colonial life."—*Spectator.*

Samuel Richards Esqre
With the Author's Regards

THE MAN

WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

BY

CHARLES ROWCROFT,

AUTHOR OF "TALES OF THE COLONIES OR THE ADVENTURES OF AN EMIGRANT."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.
1844.

THE

MAN WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

CHAPTER I.

"Now sit thee down, and tell me all this story;
And tell it not, I pray thee, as some do,
Who prate conceitedly more of themselves
Than of the subject matter of their tale,
But tell thy tale straight on; and bear in mind,
It is not of thyself that I would hear,
But of this child."

THE LORD AND THE SERVING-MAN.

IN the winter of 1803, a lady and gentleman sat by a cheerful fire in the old-fashioned library of a country house. The gentleman, who had rather a military air, had reached his fortieth year; the lady, who was still hand-

some, had arrived at that time of life which is most politely expressed, in her own words, as of " no particular age."

From a certain easy air of unconcern, and from some characteristic comforts of costume denoting the familiarity of matrimonial habits, it was easy to perceive, at a glance, that the gentleman and lady stood in the relation of husband and wife.

It was a splendid morning. The snow, crisped by the frosty air, sparkled on the ground, and the enlivening rays of the sun lighted up the landscape with that sharp and dazzling brilliancy peculiar to northern climates.

The gentleman seemed meditative; he sat, with a thoughtful air, balancing the poker in his hand, and peering into the fire with curious eye, as if seeking for some imperfect

condition of the coals to warrant the interference of another poke. The absence of any attempt on the part of the lady to possess herself of that household sceptre of the domestic hearth—unlike the struggle usual on such occasions—betokened a resigned submissiveness which had doubtless been brought about by repeated defeats during a long series of years. Or it may be, that on this especial occasion, her attention was diverted from the contemplation of the enjoyment of that intense luxury, by the appearance of a handsome boy, between six and seven years of age, who was diligently employed in constructing fortifications from the abundant materials around him. A smile of proud satisfaction mantled the mother's cheek as she gazed on her child —her only one—in all the exuberance of youthful health and beauty.

"Look at Frank," said she to her husband, with the pardonable pride of a mother, "he is the very picture of health. Look at him; he has collected a pile of snow like a heap of cannon-balls. I wonder what he is going to do with them! But he is so very clever! He always says he will be a soldier, like his papa. I do so like that in a boy—it shews such a fine spirit!"

"I tell you what," returned the gentleman, who began poking the fire with great energy, as if he had at last formed some desperate resolution; "I tell you what, my dear, that beautiful boy of yours must go to school. It was only yesterday that he smashed half-a-dozen panes of glass in the green-house; and, because there's nobody else to fire at, I suppose, he pelted old Peter so dreadfully, that the poor man was obliged to come into

the kitchen and get another drink of beer before he could use his broom. But that's nothing—the boy's getting too big, and he's beyond any woman's management; and as for me, I have too many things to look after to allow me to take charge of him. But something must be done with the poor boy; he wants playfellows. See, he's quite wretched—looking about for somebody to shy a snowball at. By George, he's at old Peter again! He'll worry that man's life out. But I must stop that sport, or there will be mischief.

"The long and the short of it is, my dear, your beautiful boy must go to school, and the sooner the better. He shall go at once to a preparatory school for a few years—I have heard of Langley Broome as a good one—and then to Eton, when he has been brushed up a bit."

So saying, Mr. Coverley made a hasty exit; and we will take advantage of his absence to give a brief account of the parents of the boy whose active propensities called for the present prompt interference of his father's authority.

CHAPTER II.

" It's a very pleasant thing, my men, to have a good estate,
With carriages to ride about, and servants all to wait;
With money in your purse enough, and wine and cheer in store,
But, while you live in ease and plenty, don't forget the poor."

SONG AT HARVEST HOME.

ON the coast of ———, and not far from the pretty village of ———, stood, or used to stand, a country mansion remarkable for the elegance of its construction, and commanding beautiful views of the surrounding country and the adjacent sea.

Part of the estate encircling this residence

consisted of about fifteen hundred acres, principally of meadow land, more picturesque, perhaps, than productive, but corresponding with the style and pretensions of the place, on which the extensive park, with its majestic oaks, stamped an aristocratic air calculated to impress on the beholder a becoming sense of the importance of the proprietor.

The owner of the estate was Mr. George Coverley, who derived it from his uncle—"a class of persons," as the facetious apothecary of the village used to say, "especially designed by a benevolent Providence for the assistance of embarrassed heroes, distressed heroines, and unprotected orphans of both sexes." That convenient individual, after realizing a large fortune by mercantile pursuits, had purchased the estate in his old age, with the design of passing the remainder of

his days in the dignified ease of a country gentleman—the *otium cum dig.*, as he would jocularly observe, when caught by a visiter working with desperate energy with a spade in his kitchen garden; a practice in which he was wont to indulge, with a view of assuring himself and other people that he did actually enjoy the occupations of a country life.

The worthy old gentleman was not destined, however, long to profit by the fruits of his hard-earned fortune. When the novelty of his unaccustomed leisure had passed away, he fell into a sort of ennui and weariness of life, and after a few years' possession he died, as the apothecary averred, "of having nothing to do."

Previous to that event, the retired merchant had made his will in a very business-like manner; and partly from that sort of

natural instinct which prompts to the upholding of one's own kith and kin, and partly from the pride of continuing the alliance between his name and his estate, he bequeathed the whole of his property to a nephew whom he had scarcely ever seen, and for whom he had never exhibited the slightest interest.

This fortunate gentleman, accordingly, exchanged his rank of ensign in a regiment of foot, for that of proprietor of the Coverley estate—with those mingled feelings of joy at the acquisition of a handsome property, and of that peculiar sort of regret at the death of a rich uncle, which usually accompanies the decease of such relatives on such occasions.

From professional habits he paid a willing obedience to the strict injunctions expressed in the will, "that the said George Coverley

should reside on the family property, and maintain the character for charity and hospitality" which the late owner regarded as the essential characteristic of a country gentleman.

From some accident, however, or from some eccentricity—or from the habit, perhaps, of viewing all sorts of property in the light of goods and chattels to be dealt in without restrictions, the testator neglected to conform with the custom of landed proprietors, of entailing his estate on his nephew's heirs; an omission which, in the present instance, had consequences not less disastrous than unanticipated.

Mr. George Coverley thus became a country potentate, as he loved to repeat, "after the fashion of his forefathers;" but it was observed by a discerning public, that he carefully ab-

stained from expatiating on his family pedigree beyond that portion of the trunk represented by his uncle, of rich and pious memory. And although it was popularly believed, that the particular forefather embodied in the person of that worthy individual, had really a father and a mother like common people, the precise social rank of those mysterious personages remained veiled in that poetical obscurity which shrouds from the vulgar apprehension more than one imposing family illustrious by its wealth in the incomprehensible world of fashion.

However, the obscurity of the progenitors of the uncle in no way affected Mr. and Mrs. Coverley in the practical concerns of life. They performed the usual functions of country people; they eat and they drank, gave dinners and balls, and attended the dinners and balls

of their neighbours—of course, only of those neighbours within the prescribed degrees of their own rank and pretensions, according to the rigorous custom in such cases—but with a readiness and good humour which made them rather popular in the county.

Mr. Coverley, besides, was always ready to do any service in his power; even to the extent of lending his favorite horse and gun occasionally, a stretch of good nature which can be adequately appreciated only by those in possession of such luxuries, but which was strikingly indicative of the innate generosity of his disposition. His excellent wife, also, took a pleasure in busying herself with the affairs of the cottagers and labourers about them; and as that excellent lady always accompanied the tracts, which she was rather fond of distributing, with presents of clothes

and money, her visits were ever welcome; and she had the satisfaction of doing much practical good by her personal interference and advice, seasoned as it was, and rendered palatable by acts of substantial kindness and utility.

So great was her reputation for that true benevolence which seeks out the poor and afflicted, without waiting for destitution to sink into despair before considering it as having arrived at the proper point of extremity to entitle it to relief, that to this day she is remembered among the poor as "the good Mrs. Coverley," "who knew that a poor body wanted clothes and victuals as well as tracts and hymn books."

"It's not that I mind setting up a psalm or two now and then," was used to say Tom Hodges, a disabled veteran, with one arm and

nearly a whole leg, and who was one of that amiable lady's most enthusiastic admirers, "it's not that I mind the drill, but when a poor fellow has no grub, it's blessed hard work singing psalms on an empty stomach!"

Such was the rank, and such were the pursuits of the representatives of the Coverley estate. They were more than easy in their circumstances; they were rich; for they had a larger income than they found it necessary to expend. Their estate, which yielded about four thousand a-year, afforded to them that happy competence which enables the possessor to enjoy all the comforts and luxuries of life without exposing him to enter into wasteful competition of splendour and political power with the dispensers of large and influential revenues.

Respected by all around them, their position

was that golden mean of life which is alike removed from great rivalries and petty jealousies; with pecuniary means too large and too stable to draw down slight, and too small to stir up envy. One thing only was wanted to complete their happiness; for many years they had no children; but at last the birth of a son and heir filled up the measure of their contentment, and he was hailed with a delight proportionate to his long expectation.

It is the fate of this child, born in that happy home, and under circumstances so auspicious for his future ease and prosperity, that forms the subject of the following pages.

CHAPTER III.

"Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields beloved in vain!
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to sooth;
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring."

GRAY'S ODE TO ETON COLLEGE.

IT was about five years after the brief conversation which has been related, that Master Frank Coverley, now between eleven and twelve years of age, arrived in a post-chaise in

much state from Eton, at which aristocratic school he had been domiciled for nearly twelve months. His personal apparel, it may be observed, was contained in a very small box, which was more than sufficient, however, to contain the remains of his wardrobe after a half-year's campaign. But this by no means comprised the whole of his baggage.

He had taken the opportunity to bring with him a very large and very ugly dog, won at a raffle, and which was the more prized as being an animal forbidden to the scholars by the rules of the college. In addition to this companion, the vehicle was laden with a miscellaneous collection of curious articles, forming the personal property of an Eton boy of his age and capabilities. Among the multifarious medley were two cricket-bats, (one in a green-baize case,) two sets of stumps, a foot-ball,

which he had amused himself with blowing up during his short journey from the neighbouring town, and with which he had solaced his solitude by kicking about, so far as the dimensions of the chaise would allow, only one window, as he boasted, having been broken in the attempt at this manly exercise. A long pole for jack-halting protruded from a side window, with a landing-net to match—useful for the securing of tittlebats and minnows.

An extremely limited bird-cage, ingeniously constructed by Frank himself from one of the drawers of his bureau, barred by little sticks of various shapes and sizes, occupied part of the seat. In one of the pockets of the door was stuffed a huge bag of marbles, accumulated principally by his successful skill at the popular game of "eggs in the bush;" and in a smaller receptacle inside were carefully deposited a

few choice taws and real blood-alleys, the etymology of which latter juvenile projectile has, from time immemorial, given rise to considerable discussion among Eton and other boys. A long tin horn, of the most cacophonous description, and a powerful pea-shooter completed his personal equipment.

It must not be forgotten, however, as doing credit to his thoughtfulness, that he brought home with him his Greek grammar—the theme of his holiday exercise—which was fringed after the manner of school-books, with every variety of dog's-ears, and illustrated in every convenient space with bold attempts at portraits—not of a flattering nature—of Dr. Fuzwig, and of various masters at the College, conspicuous from their personal appearance, or obnoxious to the community from the strict discharge of their duty.

These valuables, and various other trifles, too numerous to mention, having been carefully disembowelled from the post-chaise amidst a vehement barking from the big dog and an unearthly screeching from the raven, Master Frank gave a little flourish with his tin horn, to signify the excess of his gratification at his arrival at the paternal domains; and laden with as much of his property as he could carry —having in one hand the cage with his raven, and the other on the collar of his big dog—he presented himself to the inspection of his parents.

After the usual cordialities, his mother having encircled in her eagerness her boy and all his paraphernalia in a comprehensive maternal embrace, the father took occasion to express his surprise at the manner and the matters with which his son was encumbered.

"Well, my dear Frank, it can't be said that you have come empty-handed; but you seem to have brought with you an odd collection of varieties."

"Oh! I've got lots more things in the hall," said Frank; "and I've got a packet for you, papa, in my pocket, from my Dame. I'll get it out, if I can. Down, Brob, down, good dog. Take care, mamma, he's after the cat; he always kills all the cats he can get at—down, sir!" But Brob, true to his training, and unregardful of the company in whose presence he had the honour to wag his tail, commenced a furious chase after Mrs. Coverley's pet black cat, barking with all his might in return for the spittings and clawings with which Sultan resented his intrusion. After a vigorous application of the broom on the part of Mr. Coverley, but not before a general over-

turning of all the loose articles of furniture, the obstreperous Brob was forcibly ejected from the apartment.

Frank followed his favourite, to lay strict injunctions on Thomas to give him plenty of bones with some meat on them, and instantly to procure a paunch from the nearest butcher, that being the particular delicacy in which Mr. Brobdignag (such was his appropriate appellation in full) most loved to luxuriate.

This important affair having been satisfactorily arranged in a parenthesis, Frank returned to the drawing-room, and proceeded to extract, with no small difficulty, from a curious recess in his person, an ominous-looking packet, about eight inches long by four wide, and of that swollen and puffy appearance which gave external evidence of being stuffed with an ample mass of little bills.

"Ah, ah! I can guess what this contains," said the gentleman, weighing it in his hand with instinctive divination; "but this seems more bulky than the last one."

"Oh, my dear," said the lady, "don't trouble yourself with the bills just when the boy is come home. It can't make any difference. Bills must be paid, so there's an end of it."

"Well, well, let them bide for a while. And now, Frank, if you are not tired, you can walk over with us to Mr. Lesley's."

"Tired! I'm not tired a bit. Eton boys are never tired—they've too much pluck. ("Pluck!" said his mother.) I'm only hungry; I've scarcely had anything since yesterday morning at breakfast."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed his mother, with natural anxiety, "the poor child has

been starved! He must be quite faint! But here's the tray; well, that is very thoughtful of Thomas;—and now, my dear boy, try if you can pick a bit; do, my dear."

Upon this Master Frank gladdened his mother's heart, by picking pretty considerably at the good things before him, and walked into the interior of a veal-pie with a vigour which threatened a speedy diminution of the contents of the citadel.

"And what did you have for your breakfast yesterday morning? Nothing but a bit of bread and butter! What a dreadful long time for a child to fast! But they do so starve boys at school."

"Lor', mamma, I don't mean that I had nothing at all to eat since I left Eton; only nothing to speak of—and nothing like the prime breakfast we had yesterday."

"And what was this 'prime' breakfast, as you call it?" asked his father. "Did your Dame invite you, or the head master?"

"What, Dr. Keate, papa, ask us to breakfast! We don't like the sort of breakfast that he gives sometimes, especially on a cold frosty morning, when it isn't so pleasant to get out of a warm bed to be flogged. It was Browne gave us the breakfast, and a capital fellow he is;—lots of hot rolls!"

"Hot rolls!" said his considerate mother. "How can they let the children eat new bread; it's so heavy for the stomach! I can't imagine, my dear boy, how you contrive to digest it."

"Digest!" exclaimed Frank, pondering for a brief space at the novel idea which the unaccustomed word suggested, and suspending, for an instant only, his attack on the veal-pie—

"digest it! Lord! mamma, we digest everything at Eton, without thinking about it. It all comes natural to us. We had hot rolls, and bricks, and eggs, and jellies—and sausages, of course—and peaches, and ham and cold fowl, and grapes, and tea, and coffee, and chocolate, and potted meat, (I like potted beef best,) and creams, with cakes, and little things of that sort just spread about, so that you might just peck at them while you were waiting to be served; it was all done in capital style, and we made a regular brozier of poor Browne's breakfast——"

"A brozier, my dear boy!—what's that?'

"Oh, that's what we say when we clear everything off, as we sometimes do at our Dame's, for fun; and as there wasn't enough, we had some more hot sausages, just to finish, and that's all."

"All!" said his father; "I should think it was."

"Did mortal ever hear of such a medley of things in a human creature's inside," said his mother, with hands uplifted in astonishment.

"And how do you conduct yourselves on these state occasions," asked Mr. Coverley, considerably amused with his son's unsophisticated descriptions. "Pray, what did you have for your share? You could not partake of everything?"

"Oh, don't we, though! We're not particular, but we just begin on what comes first—some one thing, and some another. But that's nothing to what we do when we have a dinner party."

"A dinner-party! Upon my word!" said his father,—"a set of urchins, with unwiped noses, giving dinner-parties, and thinking

themselves grown men, of course! Upon my word, this is beginning rather early. Well, well, I suppose it will all correct itself. And now, Frank, if you don't mean to eat that veal-pie, dish and all, and brozier your mamma and me, you must be walking."

"Do, pray, Coverley, let the dear boy eat. Bless him! it's a pleasure to see him enjoy himself. But boys have such extraordinary appetites! Good gracious, what a breakfast! I shall never forget it!"

Frank having given ample evidence by his masticatory powers at the luncheon, of his capacity for the discussion of an Eton breakfast, the parties proceeded to the house of the clergyman of the village, who had held his small living for many years, and for whom Mr. and Mrs. Coverley entertained the highest respect and regard. Mr. Lesley was a widower,

with an only daughter, Clara, a handsome little girl, about a year younger than Frank, and who, from the propinquity of the families, had been Frank's earliest playmate, and the object of his boyish attachment — an attachment, however, which was threatened with a formidable rivalship in the person of Brobdignag, with whom Frank took the present occasion to make his playfellow acquainted; expatiating largely on his many excellent qualities, and assuring her that he was the most terrible cat-destroyer in the kingdom. He invited the young lady, also, to take the first opportunity to visit Coverley Hall, in order that he might have the pleasure of introducing her to the raven, who was, as he averred with much energy, without any exception, the most curious and remarkable bird ever known, and

that he fed it on raw liver chopped fine, and the freshest and juiciest worms, every morning. He further informed Clara, in a rapid conversation, of various of his exploits at Eton, such as shirking school, shamming sick, playing tricks on the French master, and of several wonderful catches at cricket, which had gained him considerable distinction at the college.

The young lady, on her part, made Frank the confidant of a few private communications relative to a most extraordinary bullfinch—the most intelligent and affectionate little creature ever seen—which eat out of her mouth, and whistled God save the King—almost. She related also a few select anecdotes of a most wonderful kitten, which she had rescued from the hands of some wicked marauders;

discoursing also on other matters not necessary to be recorded, but exceedingly interesting to the parties concerned.

Clara then explained to Frank a new plan for laying out her flower-garden, and requested him not to allow Brobdignag to run over the beds, as he had already broken three Scotch kail frames with his tail. She agreed nevertheless, with Frank, that Brob was the finest and the handsomest dog she had ever seen, and that she admired his name amazingly; and she assured Frank that she wasn't a bit afraid, so that "he needn't stop away because of his great dog."

Frank felt particularly gratified with his visit; and his father and mother having discoursed with Mr. Lesley on things in general, and on Frank's good looks, and redundant health in particular, the Coverleys took leave

of the Lesleys, mutually pleased with each other, and with a conference in every way so satisfactory.

Frank was not sorry to go to bed that night, having been persuaded with some difficulty by his mother, that the proper place for Brobdignag's dormitory was the stable. Frank declared that he should never be able to sleep without his dog; and after a brief and indistinct grumbling, he fell into a profound slumber, and dreamed of Clara Lesley, whom he thought he had inveigled into a punt, in order to give her the pleasure of a water excursion over the Eton marshes, during the spring floods, but the punt striking against one of the piers of the fifteen-arch bridge, the shock awoke him. It was daylight; and Frank, immediately jumping out of bed, and opening the window, inquired of the groom, who was within hail, if

Brob had passed a comfortable night. After receiving a pacifying assurance on that important point, he forthwith knocked at the door of his parents' room, and, waking them up, asked if he might go over to Mr. Lesley's, and bring Clara back to breakfast.

CHAPTER IV.

"While some on earnest business bent,
Their murm'ring labours ply,
'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint
To sweeten liberty:
Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare descry:
Still as they run, they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy."

GRAY.

IT was not for several days after Frank's arrival, that Mr. Coverley proceeded to examine the fat packet with which Frank's Dame had favoured that gentleman, by the hands of his son; but meeting with some accounts of a

novel character, with odd epithets attached to the items; he summoned his son to give an explanation of their meaning.

"Here is a strange charge," said Mr. Coverley, "which I cannot for the life of me understand. His Dame's regular account for his half year's board, fifteen guineas, is intelligible enough, but here's an extra heap of little bills for all sorts of things—let us put them together:—

	£	s.	d.
Six months' board	15	15	0
Extra	2	12	6
Single bed	2	12	6
Fire and candles	3	13	6
Mending linen	0	10	6
Washing	1	1	0
Waistcoats and pantaloons	0	10	0
Breakfast and other towels	0	6	6
Servants	1	1	0
Cleaning shoes	0	12	0
	£28	14	6

Then we go on—

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Allowance	1	10	0
School-fees	0	14	6
Share of windows	0	6	0
Carpenter and bricklayer	0	6	6
Smith	0	4	0
Candles in school	0	5	10
Extra rolls and butter	0	10	0
Letters, parcels, stages	0	10	6
	£4	7	4

Then here is more—

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Mr. Keate (that's the head master)	2	2	0
Mr. Yonge, his private tutor	10	10	0
Mr. Hexter, the writing master	3	3	0
Mr. Duclos, the French master	2	2	0
Dancing master	3	3	0
Fencing master	6	6	0
For a bureau	7	7	0
Tailor, shoemaker, earthenware, hats, gloves, soap, books, and all sorts of things.	3	15	6
	£38	8	6

But we have not done yet—

Here's a doctor's bill—

	£	s.	d.
. . . . .	2	16	6
Spirits of wine and camphor for chilblains	0	2	0
A bill for all sorts of breakages . . .	1	6	0
And due to E. Weight, for rolls and butter, and chocolate, and all sorts of things	5	4	11
	£9	9	5

Altogether amounting to 80*l.* 19*s.* 11*d.*; that is, about 160*l.* a-year, for a boy of ten years of age. But what the meaning is of all this quantity of chocolate, cocoa, coffee, ham, eggs, and rolls and butter without end, is more than I can comprehend."

"Oh, papa, that ought not to have been in my Dame's account; that's a mistake. That's my private account."

"Your PRIVATE account!"

"Yes, papa, that's my private bill for things that I have on tick."

"Have on tick! What's tick?"

"Oh, don't you know? That's when a boy has things that he wants—strawberries, and cucumbers, and sausages, and things; and then at the end of the half-year the bill is sent in, and that's going on tick."

"And who is supposed to pay the bill?"

"Oh, why, the boy who goes tick, he pays it."

"And pray," said his father, with an accent bordering on severity, "where does the boy who has the tick, as you call it, get the money?"

"Oh, he gets the money from home, of course, and pays it when he goes back. All the boys go on tick; it's the way of the school."

This explanation was given so innocently, and with such artlessness, by the ingenuous Frank, that his father felt it impossible to be

angry. For a brief space, the desire to scold his son, and the inclination to laugh, struggled for mastery, but the latter prevailed, much to Mrs. Coverley's relief, who was listening to Frank's explanations with some anxiety.

"Then what, my dear boy," said she, "is this one of butter, and one of bread, and the tea, and the chocolate, and all that? You don't give parties every day, do you?"

"Oh, no; it's only now and then. I only do as the other boys do."

"What an extraordinary expense there is for his shoes!" observed his father. "Why, Frank, do you wear two pair of shoes at a time? How do you contrive to destroy so many?"

"I don't know, papa. The shoes are always wearing out; and they don't stand the water well. Some boys have shoes on purpose."

"Stand in the water! That's an odd amusement. What do you stand in the water for?"

"Oh, we don't stand in it, we only go through it. Of course we must, or else how are we to get to the other side. You know there are lots of little streams and ditches about Eton, and when we go out for a steeple-chase, with our leaping-poles, sometimes they're not long enough, and sometimes they break, and then souse you come down in the water—but it only wets you, that's all."

"Gracious goodness! I wonder they don't catch their deaths of colds."

"Oh, we never catch cold, mamma. But it's prime fun catching the hare."

"Catching the hare! What, do you course hares, then?"

"Oh, it's not that. It's when we have a

turn out at hunt the hare, and one boy is the hare, and he drops bits of paper for the scent, and if he's a good one, he gives us a pretty run sometimes, and then, of course, we go through everything, because we are supposed to be hounds on the scent, you know, and, of course, that makes us wet. But it's the most capital fun in the world. This last half-year, we had a run as far as Salt Hill——"

"Well, never mind that now."

"And then," added Frank, "there's jack-halting."

"Jack-halting! What's that?"

"Why, don't you know? You go out with a long pole—I've got one with me—I'll go and fetch it."

"No need of that. Well, what do you do with the long pole?"

"Why, you make a loop with a piece of catgut, or some use a very thin wire, and tie it to the end of the pole, and then you look out very softly for a jack that's asleep just below the surface of the water, and you put the loop very gently along his body till you get to the thick part, and then you give a jerk, and toss him out of the water."

"And what do you do with the jack when you have caught him?"

"Why, bake him, and eat him, to be sure!"

"What, haven't you got enough to eat without going out to catch jack in the ditches to fill your bellies?"

"And they're so full of bones!" observed the mother.

"Oh, it isn't that! we like to have what we catch dressed, and to eat it—that's the

fun! We do the same with the birds that we shoot."

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Coverley, "do they trust the boys with guns! How excessively dangerous! I wonder they don't shoot one another!"

"Oh, no; we shoot moor-hens and little birds, and sometimes snipes, and if we can't find any game, we just have a shot at anything we can see. Mark Maximus had to pay five shillings for a farmer's goose just before we broke up; but he had it dressed for supper; it was put into a jar and baked, and a capital supper we made of him, only he was precious tough. But we washed it down with rum-shrub!"

"Rum-shrub!" exclaimed father and mother; "what, do the boys drink rum-shrub?"

"To be sure they do, and wine, too; but bishop's the regular Eton drink."

"Bishop! what odd names you have for things," said his mother. "And what is bishop? Is it good for colds?"

"Oh, we don't drink it for colds; we drink it because it's such prime stuff. It's made of wine—port wine's best—and lemons and spices, and lots of sugar, and we have it up at Christopher's hot and hot."

"Hot and hot!" said his father. "Rum-shrub, bishop, shooting, jack-halting,"—he muttered, as he walked up and down his study, bewildered at the new view of life which his unconscious son was unfolding to him. "Upon my word, you seem to lead a pretty life, you Eton boys. And is all this known to your masters?"

"Oh, yes, they know it, but they can't find it out—that's the fun of it. You know, if you go out of bounds you are flogged, and once I and another boy were chased by our own tutor; but he couldn't see our faces. By George! we led him a pretty dance, over hedges and through ditches, and over gates; but he would have caught us regularly, if it hadn't been for Farmer Slush's horse-pond — that bothered him—for you couldn't climb the palings because they had spikes on them; and we dashed through the pond, but he stuck fast in the middle, because he wasn't used to it, and didn't know the way. Oh, it was such glorious fun!"

"Glorious fun!" said Mr. Coverley, with a musing air, but with a lurking smile about his mouth, which he in vain endeavoured to suppress. "Upon my word, you seem to pass your

time at Eton after rather a scampish fashion. And what time have you for your studies? You seem to be always scampering about after some mischief or other. What are you learning now?"

"Oh, everything! Greek and Latin most, and French, but that's extra, and we have to do it in play-hours, so we shirk it as often as we can; and then there's fencing and dancing, and geography and mathematics, (I don't like mathematics,) and swimming, (that's good fun,) and that's all, I think."

"Well, you certainly ought to learn something for the money. Look, my dear, (to Mrs. Coverley,) here's a half-year's expense for a little chap of twelve years! It's more than the cost of a private tutor at home! How many are there of you, Frank?"

"There's five hundred and fifty-two—that

is, oppidans and tugmuttons; sixty-two tugmuttons, and the rest oppidans."

"And what's a tugmutton?"

"Oh, they're the collegers; they wear gowns and knee-breeches, and eat lots of mutton, and so we call them tugmuttons, and that always makes a fight—we have terrible fights sometimes with the tugmuttons—but somehow they're always the cleverest; they sap so."

"Sap!—what's that?"

"Lord, mamma, you don't know anything! Why, that means they fag so at their lessons. But we don't think much of a fellow that saps; we like a boy to know his lessons without learning them—just to look at them and to know them directly—and sometimes we never do look at them till we're called up. Why any fool can know his lesson if he chooses to sap at it. There's Bullfield, he's the greatest

thickhead in the school, and he does nothing but sap, and that's the way he's always perfect. But it isn't fair to get on that way; it's taking a mean advantage of the other boys that are too spirited to be saps. And we haven't much to do; and Lor', Greek's very easy, it was only the letters at first. I can always learn Greek by heart better than Latin."

"Better than English?" said his father.

"English! Lor' mamma, we don't want to learn English; we know it! Don't we speak English? What's the use of learning it!"

"Upon my word," observed Mr. Coverley, "I can't help thinking it's of more importance for a lad to learn to talk and write his own language correctly, than to do nothing but gabble Latin and Greek. I really think that boys of his age are too young to be sent to a public school like this."

"Perhaps he is, my dear; but it gives quite a rank to a boy to be able to say that he has been at Eton; and boys are always thoughtless. They do as others do, and naturally follow the example of those with whom they associate. Besides, you know Mr. Lesley says, although on the whole he is rather for private education, that a public school, particularly Eton the principal one of all, gives a boy high and honorable feelings; and you must remember saying yourself, that an Eton boy is always a gentleman for his life after. And then he forms such good connexions!"

"Well, there's something in that, perhaps; but school acquaintance is nothing, unless a lad can follow it up afterwards. However, Frank is but a child yet; but he ought not to lose his time. Tell me, Frank, what do you

know? Do you know anything? Can you do anything?"

"Oh, yes, papa, I can do lots of things; but, best of all, I think, I can play at cricket, and make Latin verses."

"Latin verses!" ejaculated his delighted mother. "God bless him, he can make Latin verses! Only think! Frank can make Latin verses! Well, Coverley, you must say that it is an extraordinary thing for such a child as Frank to make Latin verses! Perhaps he'll be a poet!"

"My dear," said Mr. Coverley, "it may be a very good thing for a boy to make Latin verses, but it seems to me he ought to learn something else besides. When I was in the army, I don't remember any one who was talked of for making verses. A boy should study fortification, and obtain a knowledge of

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military tactics, and then in case of a war—not that it matters to me now—he would know something useful. However, I suppose he will be all right in time; and, after all, when one lives in a certain set, one must do as others do. It's ill for one man to stand out against the mess, as we used to say in the army. And surely the sort of education which is good enough for the first nobility and gentry in the kingdom, must be good for our son as well as theirs."

"Besides, my dear," suggested Mrs. Coverley, "our Frank is not obliged to attend to common things, like poor people's sons. Frank, my dear, you may go and amuse yourself.—Frank," continued Mrs. Coverley, when her son had left the room, "will have a fortune of his own, and will be independent."

"True," said his father, "he will have a

nice little estate of his own ; so, after all, the most important thing is, that he should receive the same sort of education as other gentlemen's sons. It's not as if he was going into a profession."

"To be sure not," said his mother, with some pride; "Frank will be a gentleman without a profession."

CHAPTER V.

"Look at the world;—observe its deep deceits;—
No man—no thing—no speech is what it seems;
A treacherous gloss is spread o'er grossest frauds,
Veiling the rottenness that lurks beneath.
Age mimics youth and wantons like young blood;
And youth affects the wisdom of the sage.
The miser gloats in secret o'er his gold
Lamenting to men's ears his poverty!
While the poor wretch to whom a single coin
Would be a glimpse of heaven, struts in state,
In velvet cloak and beaver fiercely cocked,
Striving to cheat the vulgar—and himself!
Apeing the independent gentleman!"

OLD PLAY.

FIVE more years passed away. The boyhood of the heir to the Coverley estate was changed

to adolescence, and six years' experience at Eton had advanced him to the state of a young gentleman with some pretensions. But during that time some changes also had taken place in the position and prospects of Mr. Coverley.

Shortly before the close of the war, he had been unfortunately induced to join in some speculations in the foreign funds, which rapidly became more extensive than he anticipated, and by the revolutions in the values of which securities he suffered severe loss, and became entangled in still more serious responsibilities.

About the same time, and with the indistinct view, probably, of making up for his loss of fortune by an increase of rank and influence, he was persuaded to stand for one of the boroughs of his county, and was unintention-

ally led to expend in that attempt a considerable sum of ready money.

He lost his election, as his agent, Mr Tippem, insisted, "from want of boldness and decision," in not purchasing at any price the suffrages of a hundred and twenty voters, who had taken advantage of the opportunity to stand out for their market, and whose votes decided a closely contested struggle.

This outlay, and the necessity of making good his liabilities in the speculations into which he had rashly entered, compelled him to mortgage his estate to a considerable amount. Unfortunately, he had the weakness, partly from a desire not to give pain to his wife, and partly from pride, to conceal from his family the fact of his large losses and embarrassments. Thus his house became divided against itself—innocently, indeed, on the part of his wife—in re-

spect to their general expenditure; Mrs. Coverley not being aware of the necessity which had arisen, of severe retrenchment and economy, and Mr. Coverley viewing a style of living which he knew he could no longer afford, with a discontent and peevishness which daily grew more irritable. As their son had been since his birth the pride and the joy of their hearts, their usual conversation naturally ran on his present pursuits and future destination; and it was the theme which they had most loved to dwell on.

But now this source of mutual gratification was changed to gall and bitterness. For while the mother still took delight in indulging in observations on the agreeable prospects of her son, the father could not divest himself of the most painful apprehensions of his future fate, amounting sometimes to agony, from the compunctions which assailed him

at the thought of his own weak and inexcusable conduct. It was impossible for him to disguise from his own heart, that he was placing Frank in a false position, and deluding him with groundless expectations; expectations which, unless some favourable turn in his affairs should take place, too fortunate to rely on, would probably lead to bitter disappointment and to misery almost intolerable.

It is not the purpose of this narrative to enter into an examination of the causes which had produced the embarrassments in Mr. Coverley's affairs. The object of these volumes is to describe its effect on the fortunes of his son. To explain the temptations, the seductions of the prospect of unbounded gain, and the hopes of suddenly, and at a stroke, becoming possessed of a brilliant fortune, which by degrees and insensibly beguiled Mr. Coverley to

embark in transactions to which he was entirely unaccustomed, and for the successful conduct of which he possessed no competent experience, would require a history of itself. It is sufficient for the purpose of this story to describe its influence on the fortunes of young Frank Coverley.

It was in the winter of 1814, that the same persons sat in the same library in which they were introduced to the reader. The fire burned as cheerfully, and the sun shone as brightly on the snow-clad fields as in olden times, but the aspect of the man was changed.

Long suffering and long concealment had transformed the gay soldier to the querulous old man. He was no longer the hearty and joyous companion who was wont to stir up frolic and festivity: care and grief sat in the place of mirth and merriment;—though some-

times the sport and humour of happier days would break out, as if unconsciously—but to make more melancholy the contrast of his habitual sadness.

On the present occasion, the countenance of Mr. Coverley was melancholy and clouded. His wife was struck with the expression of his more than usual sadness, and essayed to divert the current of his better thoughts.

Deeming that no other topic could be more pleasing, she talked of her son:—

"Don't you think, my dear, that Frank grows very handsome? How long will it be before he goes to the university? Isn't it time?"

Mr. Coverley started! He was embarrassed even to nervousness; and it was not until after a pause of some minutes that he replied:—

"The universities are very expensive;—besides, young men are apt to get bad habits

there, particularly of spending money profusely. However, Frank is not a young man yet."

"Not a young man!" returned his wife. "I assure you, my dear, he thinks he is. And look how tall he is! Do you know, Mr. Lesley says it is astonishing—and he ought to know, for he was a great scholar himself before he took orders; he says it is quite astonishing how clever Frank is at making Latin verses! And he can make Greek—something; it's something beginning with 'I am,' and ending in icks; icks? micks? ricks? bricks? bics? — bics—ah! that's it—Iambics—a queer word, but, however, it's Greek! It does one good to hear him spout Greek verses!"

"I hope they may be of use to him," said Mr. Coverley, with some bitterness.

"Of use to him! my dear," said the lady; "why, they must be of some use, I suppose, or

they would not think so much of them at Eton. But at any rate, it is pleasing to see him excel other young men in what, he tells me, is the great thing at Eton College."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Coverley, slowly and gravely, "if Frank were to speak in Greek verse to our hedgers and ditchers, it would not expedite an understanding between them."

"Lord! Mr. Coverley, how ridiculous you are! What have hedgers and ditchers to do with Greek and Latin? But really, my dear, don't you think it gives a young man a fine air to be able to speak in a language which people in general don't understand? I assure you, it goes a great way with us ladies."

"Indeed, my dear; but men don't make love in Greek—at least they did not in my time."

"By the bye, my dear, talking of making love, don't you think Frank may look forward

—not yet, I mean, but at the proper time—to a good match? He will be a gentleman with a good income, and, as heir to a landed estate, he has a certain rank in the county."

Mr. Coverley's countenance assumed an expression so pale and agitated at this blunt question, that his wife was alarmed at its appearance. Her husband had frequently exhibited a remarkable sensitiveness of late, from causes which she could not divine; but she had attributed it generally to the mortification of his defeat at the election, on the success of which he had seemed to set his mind at the time, with an anxiety and determination unusual with him. On this occasion, although she plainly perceived that she had touched on some chord which had given sharp and sudden pain, she had no suspicion of the true cause; and she endeavoured, therefore, to allay the

irritation on the point which she conjectured had excited it.

"I was foolish, perhaps," she said, "to speak on such a subject at Frank's early age, but really his appearance has grown so manly, that I cannot help regarding him in mind and person as older than he really is. But, of course, I see how attached he is to Clara Lesley, and perhaps it annoys you to suppose that he might throw himself away upon a poor curate's daughter; not but that she's a nice girl—a very nice girl—but our son ought to look higher than that. It's a pity that the church is such a poor profession for making money! A clergyman is obliged to keep up a respectable appearance, or people would not be satisfied—the lower sort of people least of all; and he must give away more money in charity—that is, in proportion to his means—than other

people; so that, generally, he can't lay by anything. And then, when he dies, his children are cast upon the world—as poor Clara might be, with all her lady-like habits—without a shilling, and what's to become of them!"

The agitation of Mr. Coverley increased at these remarks of his lady, so painfully applicable to his own son's position. He remained for a considerable time in painful thought, which his wife, seeing the unsuccessful result of her attempts to restore him to good humour, was unwilling to interrupt.

At last, Mr. Coverley seemed to make up his mind to a decisive step, and, with a gravity approaching to solemnity, which instantly commanded the attention of his wife, he said, in a low voice—

"My dear, I have been thinking a good deal of Frank lately. He is a fine boy, and

capable of anything, if properly directed. But I am not quite sure that sending him to the university is the best thing to be done with him."

"The sons of gentlemen of fortune always go to the university, do they not?" replied his wife. "You would not like our Frank to be different from other young men?"

"Let me see," said Mr. Coverley, a little confused, not knowing how to make a satisfactory reply to that comprehensive question—"Frank is seventeen years of age; now this is the time that we ought seriously to think of giving him some profession."

"Some profession!" exclaimed Mrs. Coverley, in unrestrained surprise; "what on earth can possess you, my dear? what does our Frank want with a profession? Hasn't he got—that is, will have in the course of nature—four

thousand a-year? Can't he live on that, as we have done? To be sure, if you mean that he ought to pass a few years in the army, why, that's another thing. I should not mind his being in the guards, or in some horse regiment; the tenth has a handsome uniform, which would become Frank, and the army gives a young man a certain air of self-possession. But they say it makes them sad rakes, women are so caught by handsome regimentals.

"Well," concluded the lady, after a brief mental contemplation, in which her son, mounted on a prancing charger with a long tail, and with a flashing sword in his hand, formed the most conspicuous object—"I don't object to anything you think fit, my dear; you have been in the army yourself, and therefore you know what it is. If we could find a nice regiment for Frank—that is, when he has

finished his Greek and Latin—with a colonel that would look after his morals a bit, and which we could be sure would not be ordered abroad, I shouldn't object, my dear—particularly, as you seem to wish it."

"I was not thinking of the army," returned her husband, gravely; "but of some profession that would give him—that is, that would help him—I mean—would be a standby for him in case of any change, or any accident. In these times, who can be certain of anything?"

"Why, what are you thinking of, Mr. Coverley? Ever since you lost that unfortunate election, you have been harping every now and then on changes and losses. Surely we can afford to lose—what was it that it cost you—five or six thousand pounds? Well, that could not hurt us. We can save that, if you think that's an object. But what sort of pro-

fession have you got in your head for Frank? I should like to know your fancy?"

"You know Colonel Yelloley?"

"So it's to be the army, after all."

"No, no—I'm not thinking of the army in that way. Colonel Yelloley was in the Company's service. He was talking to me the other day about India; and not thinking, I dare say, that I would accept of such a thing, he told me that he had a writership at his disposal, through some friend of his—some East India director. Now a writership is a capital thing; it's a sort of fortune for a lad. Some of them up the country get I don't know how much a year, and when they come home they buy an estate and a seat in parliament, and live like princes!"

It is impossible to convey in words the indescribable astonishment of Mrs. Coverley,

at this most incomprehensible suggestion of her husband. For some minutes she was breathless; and not having been made acquainted with the real state of her husband's circumstances, and being ignorant, therefore, of the secret motives which prompted him to entertain the idea of such a destination for their son, she regarded him with doubtful and anxious eyes, fearing that some extraordinary affection of the brain had perverted his understanding. Her husband resumed his calmness, but his gloomy sadness increased; and there was a something in his look bordering on an unusual and morose expression, which filled her with pain and wonder.

In truth, that unfortunate gentleman was vexed that his wife would not understand the expediency of some change being made in the destination of their son, without his being sub-

jected to the painful humiliation of explaining all the complicated accidents which had led to its necessity.

A little more strength of mind—a little more moral courage — would have enabled him to repose his confidence in the breast of one who, of all others on earth, was best entitled to receive it, and who had the paramount right of a wife and mother to a correct knowledge of the state of his affairs. By a few words of frank explanation, how much future misery would have been avoided! But, unhappily, whether from pride or from weakness, or from a mixture of both, the opportunity was suffered to pass by, and he was only the more confirmed in the obstinacy of his reserve.

His wife, however, was unwilling to allow the gloom, which was evidently increasing in

her husband, to remain, without making an effort to dispel it; and as it seemed to be his inclination to converse on the subject of a profession for their son, she kindly and amiably resolved not to balk his humour. But the feelings of the mother could not altogether be repressed, and it was in the tone and accent of the extremity of her surprise, that she broke silence.

"My dear, are you dreaming! Are you really serious, in proposing that our dear boy should give up all the advantages of his fortune—(here her husband winced)—of his fortune and position in England, for the sake of making money in India! You cannot mean it, my dear! What will he want with more money? Haven't we enough? And then, think of the climate! And I should never see him again!—and if I did, he would be of the

colour, I suppose, of old Colonel Yelloley. I wish that old fright had lost his liver altogether, before he put such a thought into your head. I've no patience with him. He shall never come into this house again. The impertinence for him to suppose that we wanted to send our poor boy out to India—to banish him!—and make him as ugly as himself;—the horrid old monster!"

"My dear," resumed her husband, "you don't understand the matter. The Colonel did not offer the writership to me; although I believe I need only speak the word to secure it. However, I only mentioned it. I should dislike Frank going to India in that way, which is, after all, only a sort of banishment, as much as you do. It was not that sort of thing that I meant; but I think Frank ought to have some profession. For instance, large

fortunes are made by medical men in these days. There's Sir Jaspar Julep—he makes, they say, more than ten thousand a year."

"I shouldn't like my son to be a doctor," replied the lady; "it must be very disgusting —doing all sorts of operations, and dissecting people, and all that. Besides, a medical man never has a minute of his time at his own disposal; and he is liable to be called out of his bed at any time in the middle of the night, which must be very annoying. I am sure I shouldn't like it if I was his wife; and if his wife happens to be of a jealous disposition—and sometimes it must be very trying—going about at such odd times and places, and all that! No, that would never do;—somehow, I fancy it would be a very unsuitable life for our Frank."

"He might study the law," observed the

husband; "men make a good deal of money by the law. Barristers and attorneys have great influence in these days, and make plenty of money, too."

"What is the difference, my dear," inquired the lady, delighted to find that her husband talked calmly, and seemed soothed by the conversation—"what is the difference between a barrister and an attorney? I never could rightly understand it."

"Why," returned her husband, with a bitter smile, "they are both alike in one respect; they are both birds of prey, of the same genus —vulture—but differing in their species; but," added he, laughing sadly, and pleased with his own conceit, "having a strong mutual resemblance in the shape of their bills—that is, the barrister does not send in a bill like an attorney, but your attorney includes in his

bill the fees paid to the barrister. But the principal difference popularly is, that the barrister wears a wig, a mark of dignity which is not permitted to an attorney."

"A wig! What a fright a man looks in a wig! I remember seeing the lawyers in their wigs at the assizes. The sight was really awful! I don't wonder at the poor creatures being afraid to be cross-examined by them, for cross enough they looked! Positively, I shouldn't like Frank to wear a wig. It's the very objection that poor Mrs. Smatterley had to her husband's being made a bishop. You know he was a very handsome man, and was tutor to Lord Wideacre's son; and if it hadn't been for the attraction of being called 'my lady,' —she didn't mind the apron, though she said it made him look very funny, it was the wig she stuck at—she never would have consented

to it. But what have the attorneys to do?—they don't wear wigs, that is some recommendation."

"No, they do not. But then the attorney never can arrive at the dignity of the greatest wig of all—the Lord Chancellor. That's a wig worth having, my dear, for it covers a peerage, and at the least twenty thousand a year."

"Well, that's something certainly, and I dare say Frank would rather like the peerage; but really, my dear, I think it's not too much to give a man for wearing, all the days of his life, such a horrid thing as I saw on the Lord Chancellor's head, when you took me to see the Regent open the Parliament in London! But we can speak to Frank about it, and ask him if he could get over the natural objection he would have to wearing such a wig as that! I can tell him that he can't have the peerage

without it. Surely he need not have it on when he walks about the streets, and in the house, and everywhere. I should never be able to bear it, if I was his wife! Couldn't we buy a second hand one, my dear, and let it lie about the house, so that poor Frank might get accustomed to the sight of it—then it wouldn't be such a shock to him when he had to put it on. And how long would it be, my dear, before he is made Lord Chancellor? What has he got to do to be made a barrister? He wouldn't have to dissect people—so at any rate, it is not so bad as being a doctor."

"Not exactly to dissect people," replied her husband, "at least, not in the same way. But as to your question about what he would have to do, I believe the most essential part of the qualification for the bar, is the eating of a certain number of legs of mutton—or part of

them—for a certain number of years, at one of the inns of court."

"Well, thank Heaven!" said the lady, "the dear boy has a good appetite, although I don't think he is very fond of mutton. However, if it will do him good, and it is necessary that lord chancellors should be fed on mutton at the beginning—though it strikes me as a very odd preparation—I dare say our Frank could get through it as well as another. But I don't understand why they eat so much mutton at court, or what sort of inns they have there?"

"I see you don't. But the inns and the courts where lawyers are bred are not like the royal courts at all, except that I've a notion they are very expensive, and that it is difficult to keep on your legs there. But I see Frank coming up the walk with some one—it's Clara

Lesley. It's a pity—a sad pity! How happy he looks, poor fellow!"

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Mrs. Coverley, her maternal pride taking quick alarm at this equivocal epithet — "I don't see why you should call him 'poor' fellow! He seems happy enough—and so does Clara, for that matter, poor child!"

"Well, well," said her husband, rather testily; "be it so. But as we have begun the subject, we may as well take the opportunity to talk to Frank about it."

As he spoke, Frank entered the room with his companion and early playmate. But the great bell at the end of the avenue was at the same time loudly rung, and a horseman appeared at the gate, who immediately afterwards came galloping towards the hall door.

The conversation and the usual greetings

were alike suspended at this arrival, and the family waited with a lively curiosity to learn the business of the unknown messenger of good or evil tidings.

CHAPTER VI.

" Oh, my dear master, let me on my knees
Beseech you, put not off the evil day,
For come it will at last, and when it comes,
It takes us unprepared; and then the mind,
O'erwrought and broken down, is crush'd at once,—
As when the lightning strikes the riven'd ship,
The wreck's complete."

THE FAITHFUL STEWARD. *Old Play.*

" A LETTER, sir, come express from the town," said the servant, handing a square-looking missive to the master of the mansion. It was dropped by the coach, and as it was marked 'important and immediate,' the landlord of the

Green Dragon thought it best to send it over to you by a special messenger."

Mr. Coverley glanced at the superscription, and took the letter with a trembling hand. Without opening it, he rose, and crossing the passage, shut himself up in his private study.

Mrs. Coverley was nervous—Frank looked inquiringly, and Clara looked anxious. The servant stood at the open door, and hesitated.

"Is the messenger to wait, ma'am?"

"Yes—Thomas, let him wait. Perhaps he may be wanted to carry back an answer—or for something—let him wait."

"What can be the matter, Frank?" said Mrs. Coverley, when the servant had retired. "There was no black seal to the letter; besides, there is no relation to die that I know of, that could affect your father in that way.

I wish you would go to the man, and—and—see if he has anything to say. Don't attempt to disturb your father—he can't bear any one to go to him when he shuts himself in his study in that way. Clara, my love, take off your bonnet—that is, if you don't want to go home. But if you are going home, my dear, I wish you would say to Mr. Lesley, that if he is coming this way, I wish he would call in. I don't know why, but I seem to have a strange presentiment of some disaster. So, my dear girl, I wish you would go home and say to your father that I should like to see him."

"I'll go home directly, my dear Mrs. Coverley, and run all the way, and I will tell Frank that I'm going. Oh, here he is!"

"Has the man anything to say?" said his mother.

"Nothing, but that he was told to make all

the haste he could, and deliver the letter immediately. He told me he could read, which he seemed rather proud of, and that the letter was for Squire Coverley; but that was all he knew about it. Can you guess anything about it, mother? However, I suppose my father will tell you what the letter contains when he has read it."

Mrs. Coverley mused.—She remembered that a similar letter had arrived some months before, in the same sort of odd up-and-down hand-writing, and which she had ascertained, from the address which Mr. Coverley had written in reply, was from Messrs. Huntham and Skinnom—names which excited her suspicion. She remembered also that the receipt of the previous letter had violently agitated Mr. Coverley. She had no certain grounds for her surmises, but she felt herself pervaded

with those uneasy sensations which usually take possession of people when they receive an epistolary compliment from gentlemen of the legal profession, so sinistrous are the instinctive forebodings on such occasions.

" I don't like to speak ill of people, Frank, whom one does not know; but I believe the people from whom this nasty letter comes are attorneys.—Go, my dear," she repeated to Clara, her apprehensions being quickened by the indistinct idea of some calamity naturally following in such a train,—" go, my dear girl, and make haste. I wish your father was here."

Clara looked at Frank, and Frank looked at his hat. His mother, who was aware what those looks meant, put a veto on it decisively.

" No, my dear Clara; I am sorry that Frank cannot go with you—his father may want him. But Thomas shall see you safe

home, my dear. Tell your father I am uneasy about a letter which we have just received. I hope it will not worry Mr. Coverley as the last did.—My dear Frank," added the lady, as Clara left the house, to her son, who was eagerly gazing out of the window in the direction of the great gate, and who reluctantly turned round to attend to his mother, "I am afraid that something has happened to annoy your dear father. I don't know what it is, but you must take care not to say anything to vex him. And don't ask him to let you buy that mare that you wanted—never mind it—there will be plenty more to be had. And it will be as well not to talk to your father so much about your going to the university. It vexes him just at present;—indeed, I rather think he intends that you should not go to Cambridge."

"Not go to Cambridge!" said Frank. "Why, I always thought I was to go to Cambridge—and most of the Eton boys go to Cambridge. But they say they're a prime set of fellows at Oxford; so if I am to go there, I don't much mind. And perhaps it will be all the better, for I never did like mathematics—and Greek and Latin are the great points at Oxford, and I think I can get off pretty well at them."

"My dear Frank, I must tell you that your father seems to think it best for you not to go to Oxford nor Cambridge."

"Not go to college, mother! Why, where am I to go?"

"Your father talked a little about the army."

"Oh, there's no fun in the army now—there's no war!"

"By the bye, Frank, how should you like to be a doctor?"

"What, and have to feel all the women's pulses, and give the children black draughts! It's very good fun, I dare say—but why should I be a doctor? Can't I be a country gentleman? I always thought I was to be like my father."

"To be sure, my dear boy—of course you will be like your father; but your father seems to think that you ought to have some profession. What do you say to the law!"

"Oh, hang the law! There was a little fellow at Eton, whose father was a lawyer, and he used to bore us to death with his law-jargon and his stuff. One morning, when Wideacre called 'Lower boy,' the little rascal said it was against the British constitution to fag him, and wanted to read something out

of Blackstone to prove it; but Wideacre astonished his weak nerves with such a licking as he had never read of in his father's law-books, and fagged him all day, that he might acquire a practical knowledge of the Eton constitution. The young villain had the audacity to complain to Dr. Fuzwig about it; but he got nothing by that but a pœna for disturbing the doctor at his definitions. At last, the little varmint got so cantankerous, poisoning the minds of the lower boys, that there was a meeting of the fifth form, to consider of the propriety of cooling his zeal in Farmer Slush's horse-pond. I had no concern with it myself, for I was always against the fagging system—that is, till I got into the fifth form, and then I saw that things could not be carried on in a proper way without it. But I never had what I may call a regular fag; I only just used the

lower boys to get anything I wanted. But that sucking lawyer was the most terrible little fellow you ever heard—nothing would stop his talking but licking him, and sometimes not even that, for he would kick and talk at the same time, like a little fury. He had a brother, who was quite different; but he was to be a parson."

"Now I think of it, Frank, your father said nothing about the church. If he is determined that you must have some profession, though really I must say I can't see any necessity for it—but, of course, what your father says is right — don't you think, my dear Frank, that it would be a nice quiet life?"

"Oh, no, mother, that would never do for me. If you knew how sick we were of going to church! We had to go twice on a whole holiday, and once on a half holiday. On the

finest day perhaps for cricket, or foot-ball, according to the season, there we had to go to church, and it could be only for form's sake, for nobody pays any attention. I do assure you, mother, it quite destroys the Sunday's church, for the boys get a habit of being careless and inattentive. There was one chap made a good spec about our going to church so often. He kept a little shop up the town, and he got some books bound up like prayer-books, such as Tom Jones, Peregrine Pickle, Roderic Random, and other books that had fun in them, and the boys bought 'em to pass away the time in church; I mean the week-day church; it was never done on the Sundays. It was all very well till it came to Mr. Gimbletighe's turn to attend, and I dare say it did astonish him to see the boys grown so attentive all of a sudden; for there they were, lots

of 'em, turning over the leaves of their prayer-books so diligently, and seeming so wrapped up in their devotions!

"Well, he didn't know what to make of it, and was puzzling himself, I dare say, to account for the new religious fervor that had sprung up among the Etonians, when his intellects were suddenly enlightened by an unexpected incident. One unlucky chap—it was Browne Minor—who was particularly enjoying himself in the midst of the noise of the psalm-singing with a volume of Tom Jones, was so tickled with some scene that he quite forgot himself, and burst out into a loud laugh.

"It happened unluckily that there was a sudden pause in the music, as you know there is sometimes, and there was a momentary silence, so that the unexpected note of poor Browne not being in the regular tune set

down for the occasion, and being wrong-placed besides, was astonishingly effective, and created quite a sensation. This explosion, however, gave a hint to Mr. Gimbletighe, for he shot down in a giffey from his desk, and although the book was passed from hand to hand with incomprehensible rapidity, he nailed it at last, and of course there was a regular blow up, and that fun was put a stop to.

"Do you know, mother, I really think it is a bad thing for boys to be made to go to church that way, as a sort of coercion; but of course boys would always rather be at play than anything else. I only speak of what I have observed of its effects on boys when I was there; and it was a common talk with us higher ones that it would be better to leave off the practice, or else to have the service perhaps earlier and later in the day. For the going

to church is not allowed to interfere with school-hours, only with play-hours, which makes the boys dislike it. But it is one of the rules of the college, and so I suppose it can't be altered."

"I don't know. I don't pretend to be more learned in these things than other people, but I should like to hear Mr. Lesley's opinion upon it. I declare there he is, coming up the walk. I suppose Clara has met him, and asked him to call on us."

"He is alone," said Frank, in a disappointed tone.

"All the better," observed his mother, "for I want to talk with him."

"My dear Mr. Lesley, I am so glad to see you," as the reverend gentleman entered the house.

"I met Clara," said Mr. Lesley, "and she

hastened my intention to call on you. I despatched her home, as she is my little housekeeper, to attend to her own affairs. What is the matter, pray? And what mysterious letter is this that has frightened you all? Where is Mr. Coverley?"

"He took the letter with him into his study. Frank, tell your father that Mr. Lesley is here. I know when he is vexed about anything he is always glad to see you; and really I ought to apologize for so often troubling you of late."

"Say nothing about it," said the good pastor; "you could not pay me a higher compliment.—Stay, my dear boy, I will go to your father myself. He may not like to be disturbed, but he will not mind me, I dare say."

So saying, the clergyman crossed the pas-

sage, and proceeded to announce himself to his old friend; but a sight met his eyes which filled him with an alarm so sudden that in his surprise he uttered a cry of fear which quickly brought the mother and son to his side. They beheld Mr. Coverley stretched on the floor, motionless, speechless, and apparently dead.

In a moment Frank had despatched the messenger, who was waiting at the door, to the village, for the apothecary.

"Ride fast, my good man," said Frank, "you shall not lose anything by urging your horse to his utmost."

"Never fear, sir; I'll make the horse go to serve 'Squire Coverley, depend upon it."

In the meantime, the clergyman, with the assistance of the servants, raised his friend from the ground, and placed him on the sofa. In a few minutes they had the satisfaction to

perceive that he faintly breathed; and the family apothecary, who was not long in reaching the house, having applied expedient remedies, Mr. Coverley was in a short time sufficiently recovered from his fit to sit up and look about him.

"Where is the letter?" were the first words he uttered.

It was placed in his hands; he clenched it. —"Leave me alone!"

"Not quite alone, my dear," said his wife, soothingly.

"Well, you can stay; but give me my writing desk."

It was brought to him; he placed in it the fatal letter, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

If ever woman longed to know a secret, poor Mrs. Coverley longed to see that letter. But

deference to her husband, especially in his present condition, for a relapse might be feared, stifled her curiosity. But as a knowledge of this mysterious epistle is necessary to the right understanding of this history, although the wife whom it so immediately concerned, in accordance with Mr. Coverley's obstinate reserve, was never permitted to know its contents, it is here given for the information of the reader.

"No. 6, Cobweb Court, Dismal Buildings,
September 17th, ——.

"RE SNATCHITT *v.* COVERLEY.

"SIR,—We are instructed by our client to inform you, that unless your bond for 21,682*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*, long overdue, be paid on or before the 24th inst., process must issue without delay. We hope, therefore, that you will give directions for the amount to be paid to us at

this office, in order to prevent the unpleasantness of an execution being levied in your dwelling-house, which might, perhaps, put you to inconvenience.

"We remain, Sir, yours obediently,

"HUNTHAM & SKINNOM."

CHAPTER VII.

"—— And, seeing that God has permitted the existence of venomous and noxious reptiles, it is to be presumed that they are not without their uses, although, from man's limited capacity and knowledge, he may not be able to understand their necessity. In respect to the evil spirit of the moral world, which has been believed in and personified in various shapes, and under various appellations, by all nations, and in all times, as the antagonist principle to the benevolent attribute of the Deity, and to which is assigned the province of prompting to evil actions," &c.

UNPUBLISHED ESSAY.

MRS. COVERLEY was surprised the next morning by her husband's intimation of the necessity of his proceeding immediately to town on

business of importance. In spite of her entreaties and remonstrances, he persisted in his determination of going alone, and he set out on his journey accordingly, with a heaviness of heart which he tried in vain to disguise, leaving his wife a prey to the most anxious apprehensions.

On his arrival in London, he lost no time in calling on the attorneys from whom he had received the terrible threat of execution. He had no difficulty in finding them out, for, on inquiring in the murky precincts of their dismal place of business, the lively old cobbler at the corner directed him at once to the spot.

"Huntham and Skinnom ? Ay, ay, they're easy enough to be found. Just go straight on," said the cobbler, pointing with the toe of a dilapidated boot which he held in his hand; "keep straight on, and just before you come

to the churchyard, you'll see a brass plate on a door—it's not the only bit of brass that you'll see, I'm thinking; but that's neither here nor there. You've only to push it open—it's easy enough to get in; but to get out again—that's another matter. But that's nothing to me; every one to his trade, say I."

Guided by this information, Mr. Coverley groped his way to the door, and presently stood in the presence of those redoutable functionaries, Messrs. Huntham and Skinnom.

Mr. Skinnom, with a most benevolent-looking bald head, and the blandest smile in the world, requested his visitor to be seated; and himself sinking into the recesses of a huge horse-hair chair, became invisible, or dimly seen, amidst the chaos of papers with red tape in which he was enshrouded.

"I am come," began Mr. Coverley, with a

voice ill assumed, addressing himself to the bald head which appeared above the pile of melancholy-looking papers, "relative to the letter which I have received from your firm—that unfortunate affair of the bond."

"Oh, Mr. Coverley, yes; most happy to see you, sir; yes, sir—allow me for a moment"—selecting a heavy-looking packet of documents from a private drawer. "I see; in the matter of Snatchitt. Yes, sir—Mr. Smoothly Snatchitt. You are come, I presume, to settle that little matter—21,862*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* There are some trifling expenses to be added, but the clerk shall give you a note of them immediately."

"I am not come," interrupted Mr. Coverley, hesitating, "to pay, exactly. In point of fact—for it is better to come to the point at once—I have not the ready money; and, indeed, I expected that the other parties whose

names are to the bond would have provided the funds, according to their promise, long before this time."

"Sorry to hear that," said Mr. Skinnom, smiling benevolently on his visitor. "You see, sir, our respected client has given us very positive instructions to enforce payment, and as the other gentlemen who joined you in this security are not readily to be found, we are obliged to look to you."

"But surely," replied Mr. Coverley, "Mr. Snatchitt, who must be aware that my signature was put to the parchment only for accommodation of others, will not require payment of the whole sum from me!"

"It's an unfortunate circumstance for you, sir, doubtless, that you should be called upon to pay the money; but we, sir, acting for Mr. Snatchitt, must follow his instructions, and his

directions are most positive and peremptory; indeed, he has found fault with us for not being more active in recovering the amount so long overdue; but it is always our desire to afford every reasonable accommodation that depends upon us, and especially, sir, to so respectable a gentleman as yourself."

Mr. Coverley began to feel a little more at ease under the excessive politeness of Mr. Skinnom; and, emboldened by the considerate softness of his manner, ventured to consult him on the best steps for him to take under the circumstances.

"It is sometimes possible for us," said Mr. Skinnom, "to raise money on security that is unexceptionable. It's a thing that we do not like to do, for it is usually a troublesome operation, and never remunerates us for our trouble; and at this time especially, money is

so very scarce, that I fear it would be totally out of our power to assist you. But still as we are exceedingly desirous of preventing the disagreeable publicity of an execution"—(Mr. Coverley winced at this)—"we would try to assist you; but really we would rather that you applied to somebody else."

"To tell the truth," said Mr. Coverley, "I don't know, at the moment, who to apply to; my late professional adviser is dead. I thought of consulting a gentleman of the name of Playfair, whom you may know; but I would rather settle the matter at once, if it could be done, and I should not mind making some sacrifice."

"Your estate," said the obliging man of law, "is it heavily mortgaged?"

"Not to anything like its value; it is worth a good four thousand a-year, and it is my own freehold."

"Your own freehold; but it is entailed, of course?"

"It so happens, fortunately, that my late uncle left it to me without encumbrance or restriction. It is mortgaged, certainly, but to an amount less than sixty thousand pounds."

"How many acres did you say?"

"Nearly three thousand."

"Three thousand acres, with a handsome mansion. I will see what my partner says about it, if you please; but really I fear it is not in our power to raise the money for you. It is a large sum; and the general commercial difficulties are so great, that there is no money to be had at any price. But to oblige so respectable a gentleman as yourself, my partner, perhaps, might be induced to stretch a point. Do me the favour to amuse yourself with a book—(putting the 'Law of Arrest and Exe-

cution' into his hands)—and I will say a few words to Mr. Huntham on the subject."

With this benevolent intent, Mr. Skinnom retired through a little back door at the corner of his office, and propounded the matter to his fellow-vulture in the following terms:—

"I say, Huntham, there's some stuff in my room that we may get something out of."

"Who is it?"

"That Mr. Coverley, of Devonshire, who signed the bond to Snatchitt."

"More fool he! But that's his affair. Has he got the money?"

"No; but he has got a damnation fine estate. I know it well, but he doesn't suspect that. He is in a hell of a funk, and is ready to give his ears to keep the matter snug."

"But will his estate bear bleeding?" said Mr. Huntham.

"Oh, it's as good as gold! And what do you think?—upon my soul, it's like the game walking into one's net—he wants *us* to raise the money for him!"

"I hope you told him we couldn't."

"Of course I did. I tickled him nicely, and made it a favour to try; and that's what I'm supposed to come to you for. It would be a pity to let him slip through our fingers, for there he sits like a lamb to be slaughtered, and we may do what we like with him."

"Is there no way of making a fatter bill out of him before we get him the money? Couldn't you egg him on to dispute the bond?"

"Impossible; you know he confessed judgment, and signed a warrant of attorney five months ago. There's nothing to do now but to issue execution."

"Suppose," said Mr. Huntham, meditat-

ingly, "we were to have him grabbed and locked up?"

"That might make him desperate, and then he would get into Playfair's hands, and we should lose the chance."

"Damn that fellow, I say; he's always spoiling the game for other people. What the devil! does he think that attorneys can live by 'settling actions!' No, no! when two fools want to go to law, let 'em go at it hammer and tongs—never stop 'em! But the very first thing that dirty dog Playfair does, is to try to reconcile the parties, and recommend them not to go to law! Not go to law! Why, what would become of all of us if people didn't go to law? That Marplot Playfair is the curse of the profession! Well then, if that's the case, we had better hook our man at once. You say he'll bear bleeding?"

"As much as you please. He's in a pretty sweat, though he tries to seem cool; but I see through him. He'd give his eyes to get out of the mess quietly."

"Come, then, let us go at him together," said Huntham; "and mind, you're to do the blarney. I shall say it's a thing impossible—that we must proceed to execution, and all that."

Those respectable gentlemen returned accordingly to the office in which Mr. Coverley was deposited, waiting with no little anxiety the issue of the conference.

Mr. Skinnom entered smiling; and, with a bland placidity such as good men bear, reseated himself softly in his horse-hair chair.

His partner, on the contrary, came in briskly, and with a determined air, as if he had definitively made up his mind, and was not to be

moved from his decision by the amiable expostulations of his virtuous partner. He walked with a quick step up and down the room.

"It can't be done," he began; "you know, Skinnom, we tried it only the other day. There is no money to be had; besides, we want it ourselves; and you have already got the house into a scrape by going out of our way to save another gentleman from going to gaol. You'll ruin me and yourself too, Skinnom; you will indeed, doing these things; it's not business-like. It's for us to receive the money—not to go about begging for it."

"But, my dear sir," said Skinnom, in his mildest accents, "it is to save a respectable gentleman from a public exposure of his affairs; and he's not used to these things.—You never had an execution in your house, I dare say," turning and bowing to their unhappy visitor.

"Good God!—no!" said Mr. Coverley, growing red and pale by turns,—"it would drive me mad! Is there no way, gentlemen, by which the matter could be put off for a few months, or weeks?"

"Put off! God bless you," said Huntham; "you don't know what I have suffered this morning from Mr. Snatchitt. He's quite mad for his money; and he blames us for not getting it from you. It was only this very morning that he gave me the most positive instructions—I haven't had time to tell you of it, Skinnom—the most positive instructions—and if we don't do it, he swears he'll find somebody that will—to issue an execution against the person of this gentleman.—It would not be agreeable to you, perhaps," he continued, to Mr. Coverley, who sat dumb with consternation, "to be arrested this morning? But,

upon my life, we ought to do it. A solicitor has great responsibility; and he must not allow his feelings to get the better of his duty! —I don't see what we can do, Skinnom."

Mr. Skinnom looked excessively concerned —indeed, shocked—at this hopeless state of things, and he passed his white cambric pocket-handkerchief once or twice over his benevolent-looking forehead, in order to clear away the dust from his ideas.

"It's a desperate case," said he, after a short pause, sufficient to allow the fear of their victim to become almost unbearable—"it's a desperate case; but, my dear sir, could not the money be raised by any means, to relieve this unfortunate gentleman from his difficulty? it's the expense I look to. How would he be able to shew himself among his friends and acquaintances in the country, and

his family, and his servants," continued Mr. Skinnom, ingeniously conjuring up every spectre of derision he could think of—"and all the people in the village and neighbourhood, and, indeed, the county, after the publicity of his arrest—of his ARREST, you know—which some people regard as a great indignity, and as a disgrace;—and then the exposure of all his affairs," added the damned good-natured Skinnom, with considerate foresight. "Could he not raise money, by giving a sort of bonus for the accommodation?"

"He would have to pay dear for it," replied Huntham, seriously.

"I will pay anything!" exclaimed the tortured victim, goaded to a state of desperation at the horror of arrest, and all its consequences —"anything!"

"Very dear," repeated Huntham, with a

composed sort of emphasis, looking fixedly at Mr. Coverley, and meaningly at his confederate; "but perhaps there's a chance. Yes! now I think of it, we have a client that you know of, Skinnom, who is to receive nearly twenty thousand pounds about this time. But he would never lend it without a bonus, more than we could advise this gentleman to give."

"Suppose we were to offer him a bonus of five per cent., in the shape of a commission?" suggested his partner.

"He would laugh at it."

"Well, say seven and a half?"

"He can make more of his money."

"Suppose we offered him ten?"

"He wouldn't do it, I say," said Huntham, looking scrutinizingly at the victim, and inquiringly at his partner.

"I would not offer more," said Skinnom, with a virtuous air.

"Ten per cent.," observed Mr. Coverley, "would be more than two thousand pounds as a bonus, and then there would be the interest."

"At five per cent., of course," said Skinnom.

"Two thousand pounds for the accommodation," mused the unfortunate man—"it's a large sum!"

"It is," said Huntham; "but he wouldn't do it for that. Perhaps for twelve and a half, he might be tempted."

Skinnom looked at Huntham, and shook his head.

"It's too much," said Huntham; "but when money is wanted in a hurry it must be paid for;—and it saves this gentleman from arrest to-morrow morning, or perhaps this evening."

"But how am I to get the money for the bonus?" asked Mr. Coverley.

"Oh! we will manage that for you. I dare say we could persuade the lender to add it to the mortgage."

"Anything," said Mr. Skinnom, "to save so respectable a gentleman from being taken to prison."

"I'll give it!" cried Mr. Coverley, eagerly. "It must be done; and perhaps the other parties may come forward at last, and provide for the debt that they have saddled me with. But in one word, I say, I consent. There will be no more expenses, I suppose?"

"Nothing but the expense of surveying the estate. That must be done, in justice to our client," said Huntham, in a decisive tone.

"There's the valuing—five per cent.," said Skinnom, coolly.

"To be sure; I forgot that. And then we must examine into the title," added Huntham, while Mr. Coverley turned his head from one to the other, as they tossed the ball between them.

"That's a thing in course," chimed in Skinnom; "and such other little expenses as may be incurred," he observed, in a mild and polite way, "we can let stand over, so that Mr. Coverley will not be pressed for anything that depends upon us. And now," he added, with one of his most engaging smiles to their netted fish, "I dare say it would be more agreeable to Mr. Coverley, and would tend to soothe his feelings, if we could give him some assurance in writing, that he will not be personally molested on account of this unpleasant affair."

"I don't quite like it," said Huntham, "but

I'm the last man in the world to stand in the way of doing a good action. You had better prepare the papers, then, at once, or perhaps that impatient Mr. Snatchitt may step in and insist on our issuing the writ without delay."

There was no more wanted to stimulate Mr. Coverley to sign and seal all that was wanted of him — the accommodating Mr. Skinnom intimating that the other necessary documents would be prepared without delay, and forwarded to Mr. Coverley, for his signature, in the country, charging the expense of the journey to his account.

The matter being thus arranged to the satisfaction of all parties, Mr. Coverley took his leave, the attentive Mr. Skinnom accompanying him, with excessive politeness, to the outer door, and recommending him, with the most

officious anxiety, to take a coach to his hotel, as it seemed likely to rain.

When that respectable gentleman returned to his horse-hair chair, his worthy partner sat down opposite to him; and they regarded each other, for a brief space, with countenances of mutual intelligence, which it would be impossible to describe.

"D—d well done," said Skinnom, with a sort of enthusiasm; "you surpassed yourself."

"My dear fellow," said Huntham, "you have no equal at this sort of gammon. By —, I believe you would take me in with your d—d insinuating tongue."

"Not I," replied the other, with deprecatory modesty. "I defy the devil himself to do that. But really, it is quite pleasing to one's feelings to see that poor man go away so relieved—isn't it?"

"Your feelings! D—n that humbug! None of that with me!—it's too much!"

And with such reciprocal compliments, these well-matched associates did violence to their feelings by separating, for the present, to fulfil their congenial destinations.

In the meantime, Mr. Coverley paced the streets in a hurried manner, till he reached his hotel. There he took breath to revolve the occurrences of the last two hours. On the whole he was satisfied. He was relieved from a great and pressing difficulty; and the unexpectedness of the help, coming, as it were, out of the enemy's camp, re-acting on his spirits, restored him to temporary calmness; and it was with a delusive cheerfulness, therefore, that he returned to his family in Devonshire.

For some time things went on as usual, but the necessity of paying punctually the interest

of the borrowed money, in addition to the sum raised on a previous occasion, increased the difficulty of providing for his yearly expenses. But being unwilling to lower his appearance in the county, and buoyed up by the hope that the parties who had involved him in his difficulties would be able ultimately to meet their engagements, he shrunk from appearing among his neighbours and acquaintances as a poor and ruined man. Besides, his mental faculties as well as his bodily constitution had really become enfeebled, from the shock of the threatened execution and the dread of personal arrest; so that being too weak to face his difficulties, and, by timely retrenchment, to avert the coming evil, he from time to time patched up his affairs by repeated borrowings. As the security, however, became less and less satisfactory, such temporary loans could be obtained

only by paying the most exorbitant interest, which eating like a canker into his estate, soon reduced him to an income merely nominal, and a property only in appearance.

But this state of things was sedulously concealed from his friends and family, and no one in the neighbourhood suspected that Squire Coverley's acres were rapidly crumbling away from under him, or that, while he was living in seeming abundance and prosperity, ruin was suspended over his head only by a single hair.

All this could not fail to have a depressing influence on the health and spirits of the unhappy sufferer, which was visible to all; but as the true cause was unknown, it was attributed to the apoplectic fit with which he had been suddenly seized some time before, and which was considered to have enfeebled, in some way, his vital powers.

But another source of affliction arose. The weakness and nervous irritability which constantly afflicted Mr. Coverley had an unfavourable effect on the health of his wife, who gradually sunk under the painful sight of the constant sufferings of her husband. Under such circumstances, Frank gave up his long-cherished idea of going to the university, for although there was no change in the outward and general appearance of the family establishment, those in its immediate intimacy could not fail to observe a frequent peevish parsimony on the part of Mr. Coverley, and a reluctance to enter into any fresh outlays of money; a state of mind, however, which was set down to his desire to accumulate money for the benefit of his son, with a view, probably, it was conjectured, of enabling him to go at an early age into parliament.

Frank also, on his part, was disinclined, from duty and affection, to leave his father in his enfeebled and indeed pitiable condition; so that he remained at home, without any other pursuits than the occasional country recreations which were within his reach. The absence of any fixed object led him for a time into those idle and lounging habits, which are so dangerous to a young man at that age; and he was exposed to rust and spoil from listlessness and want of occupation. But events now occurred which changed the current of his destiny.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Mrs. Silvertongue *to* Mrs. Bitewell (*entering*).

Do pray, ma'am, be seated: of course you'll take tea:—
We were talking of Bella, and that Mr. G——
It's a sad thing to say, ma'am—but really I fear
That a certain disclosure will shortly appear!
There are rumours—like shadows, *some* things cast before 'em—
Of something that's worse than a mere INDECORUM!

Mrs. Bitewell.

Indeed, ma'am, it's shocking—but people do say—

Footman.

Miss Bella—

Mrs. Silvertongue.

My dear, you look charming to-day!
It's only this moment Miss Daw and Miss Jay
Were talking and wondering what *could* the matter be
To keep you away, love!

Bella, *curtsying low.*

"Oh! dear ma'am, you flatter me!"

"Scandal." *A Satire.*

Sir Matthew Carlton, a gentleman of family and good education, who resided on his own

estate, a few miles from Coverley Hall, had taken a great fancy to Frank, on account of his amiable and ingenuous disposition; and he was earnest in his invitations to his young friend to keep up the acquaintance with his family.

This predilection was assisted, perhaps, in some degree—such are the mingled motives which prompt man's actions—by the circumstance of his having, with an estate entailed on a male heir, a large family of daughters, to whom—and to whose parents especially—a young gentleman of handsome person was not the less welcome from his being heir to a good estate.

It was on the occasion of a long visit, one day, to Sir Matthew's house, that Frank became suddenly and disagreeably awakened to a sense of some of his deficiencies.

"My dearest Lousia," said Lady Carlton to her youngest daughter, "you will tease Mr. Coverley to death with your poetry and your nonsense. I dare say, if he would speak the truth, he would rather be out with the hounds, than passing his time"—looking round with considerable maternal pride on her five handsome daughters—"with silly girls."

"I was only asking Mr. Coverley, mamma, to help me with this passage of Tasso. It is so difficult to put into English, to please like the Italian. But Italian is such a beautiful language! So soft, and so musical! Do pray," turning to Frank, "help me to translate this—there's a good creature."

The clustering curls of the young girl brushed against Frank's cheek, as she inclined her head towards him, and pointed out the vexatious lines with her delicate fingers.

It was a perilous position for a young man. There is some mysterious influence—mesmeric or electric—in the close propinquity of a beautiful girl, which puzzles philosophers; but on the present occasion, there was a pre-occupation of Frank's "nervous system," as physicians term it—a sort of counter-irritation, which averted its dangerous action.

Lady Carlton saw that he was troubled, and was not by any means displeased at the exhibition of a confusion which was favorable to her views; but although a clever woman, with marriageable daughters to stimulate her natural penetration, the usual keenness of that double capacity was at fault in the present instance.

The plain fact was, that Frank was quite insensible, at the moment, to everything but the humiliating circumstance of his not under-

standing one word of Italian. He gazed at the words, which looked tantalizingly like Latin, and tried to virilize them by supplying consonants here and there; but it would not do. He was about to confess his ignorance, when the impatient Louisa clapped her little white hands—

"There! mamma: you see that it is difficult, for Mr. Coverley cannot make up his mind how to translate it. But here," she added, reaching a book from a shelf, "is a French translation; let us put the two together, and see if they may not help each other."

This was worse and worse; poor Frank knew no more of the French language than he did of the Italian. His embarrassment increased, much to the satisfaction of the lady-mother, who observed with maternal com-

placency, that he seemed too much absorbed by other emotions, as she flattered herself—and she liked him the better for it—to be able to attend to the criticism of translations. But wishing to help on an affair in such good train, and which seemed to want only a little judicious encouragement to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, she remarked with an air of indifference—

"Talking of Italian and poetry, Louisa, I just remember that you have never shewn to me that little scene of the Italian village since you finished it. Go, my love, and fetch it. But I am very much afraid this is dull society for Mr. Coverley."

"Quite the contrary," said Frank, eagerly closing the annoying volumes, and relieving his oppression by a deep sigh—which was translated by the observant mother, in ac-

cordance with her own thoughts—"I am sure any painting proceeding from such a hand must be beautiful."

"It is going on very well," thought the mother. "Pretty well," said she, aloud. But certainly Louisa has done some extraordinary things for a child of her age; and her skill in perspective is remarkable. Do you draw?"

"No," said Frank, to whom the word "perspective" caused a slight chill, for he was conscious of his ignorance relating to the mysteries of the mathematics; "no, we did not attend much to those things at Eton; Latin and Greek were our principal studies there."

"It is an elegant and often a useful accomplishment," observed Lady Carlton, "but perhaps it is not so well adapted to gentlemen as to ladies, for whom such sedentary employments are more desirable."

"I am quite ashamed to shew such a daub," said Louisa, returning with the drawing.

"It is beautiful!" cried Frank, with enthusiasm. The other sisters suspended for a moment their various avocations, and exchanged looks of intelligence.

"It is not badly done," said Lady Carlton. "I see, Louisa, you have brought out those musicians a little better; they were too much in the shade before. How lively the villagers look, dancing! one can almost fancy that one can hear the air the musicians are playing. Are you fond of music, Mr. Coverley?"

"Passionately!" said Frank.

"Do, my dear Louisa, let Mr. Coverley hear that little French air that was sent from town the other day."

The air was played—Frank was delighted; others followed. The young lady sang; Frank applauded rapturously. The mother could scarcely conceal her satisfaction. But the harmony was interrupted by a casual question from Frank:—

"Have you got the Hebrew Melodies? I heard them yesterday at Mr. Lesley's. You cannot imagine how beautifully Miss Lesley sings them!"

Miss Louisa Carlton was not ill natured, nor envious, in a general way; and she had a tolerably satisfactory conviction of her own personal attractions; and, moreover, she rather liked Clara Lesley. But, on the present occasion, this sudden exclamation from Frank jarred on her ear disagreeably, and produced a discord in the notes which caused her to close a grand finale with an abrupt flourish

not contemplated by the composer: she concluded with a sudden crash.

Her watchful mother, with the freemasonry of womankind, understood well what that crash meant. She was aware of the intimacy of the Lesleys with the Coverleys; and although Mr. Lesley was not in a position to render a match with his daughter desirable on the score of fortune or connexions—and it seemed to her quite incongruous that the heir to the Coverley estate should throw himself away on a poor parson's daughter,—yet she could not dispossess herself of a certain fear that the opportunities of intimacy which Clara had enjoyed might have been turned to advantage. It was with these thoughts, and with a mother's instinctive apprehension of the desirableness of depreciating rival pretensions, that she observed, in a careless manner—

"Miss Lesley has not been looking well of late. Don't you think, my dear," turning to her eldest daughter, "that the poor girl gets very thin?"

"Very, mamma," replied Louisa, "very thin; and it's so curious that she should have such a colour at the same time. One would almost think that she painted, but of course she doesn't—only it's so odd!"

"You must not say those things," said the mother; "although I know, my love, that you mean no harm by it."

"I'm sure Miss Lesley doesn't use paint," said Frank, decidedly; "I'm quite sure of that!"

The mother smiled at Frank's earnestness; but it was rather a forced smile—a smile ambiguous and inquisitive; for there was something downright and positive in Frank's asser-

tion—a sort of conviction from experience, as it struck the mother, that was anything but satisfactory to that lady's speculations. She felt that the game must be dexterously played, or she should lose her point.

"Miss Lesley is a sweet girl, a very interesting girl,"—Frank looked more pleased than she liked—"very; and one cannot but feel for her, poor thing; but that falling away——"

"Miss Lesley never was fat," interrupted Frank.

"That excessive slightness," pursued the lady, in a sort of mental abstraction, "can be attributed, I fear, to only one cause. It's a dreadful thing," turning to Frank, "to have consumption in a family!"

This was an insidious blow, on the part of that otherwise well-bred lady; but she

knew that Frank had a dread of consumptive people, and the interest of the mother overcame all other considerations.

Frank looked concerned at this; he had no suspicion of the manœuvre. His admiration had often been excited by the sylph-like lightness of Clara's form, which, compared with the plump and Rubens-like persons of the Miss Carltons, handsome girls as they were, certainly did present to his mind a very decided contrast. But the contrast was momentarily painful.

"Perhaps," observed one of the Miss Carltons, "Miss Lesley looks so very thin because she is so very tall?"

"Perhaps so, my love. She is certainly very tall; too tall, as I have heard many gentlemen say, for a woman. The height of the Venus de Medicis," looking at her daughter

Louisa, and glad to observe that Frank's eyes followed her own in evident admiration, "is—what is the height, Louisa?"

"It's a little more than mine," replied Louisa, with an innocent look; "but only a very little bit—less than a line; the French gentleman said it was not quite so much as a millimetre, and he observed to you, mamma, that he thought the Venus de Medici was a trifling degree too high."

"I wonder what the colour of the hair and eyes of Venus really was?" said Miss Carlton.

"Dark hair and eyes are considered most expressive," replied Lady Carlton; "and as the Greeks were a dark people, it is to be presumed that their idea of the perfection of beauty was in accordance with the objects that they habitually saw around them. Besides, there is something insipid in light eyes. I

have heard men sometimes compare them to bottled gooseberries."

The four Miss Carltons laughed. Their eyes were of the gipsy cast—black, bright, and penetrating. They opened them wide, as if in justification of their mother's taste, and fixing them with one accord on Frank, they gave him a simultaneous volley, which shot him through and through.

Frank could not stand the discharge of a whole platoon after this fashion, and he turned his face to the side of the less invidious Louisa, who, having reserved her fire, met his look with a flash from her own brilliant eyes which went near to upset his equanimity.

This last stroke almost finished him. He was in evident confusion, and shewed signs of being under the mesmeric influence of female bewitchment. The mother flattered herself

that a decided impression had been made, and thinking it a favorable opportunity, like a skilful general, she determined to follow up the first success.

"Miss Lesley, as I was saying—poor girl—looks very delicate, and I have generally observed that light eyes are an accompaniment of weak health."

"What is the colour of Miss Lesley's eyes?" asked Miss Carlton; "I'm sure I never thought of observing them."

"Miss Lesley has blue eyes," said Frank, musingly.

"Not exactly blue, I think," said the lady-mother; "perhaps a sort of blue; a kind of light, or rather greyish blue—a consumptive-looking eye, poor girl."

"Frank had often looked into Clara's eyes, and he was quite positive in his own mind

that they were of a bright blue, but he said nothing.

"It's what artists call a sleepy eye," said Miss Carlton; "an eye is never expressive when the lid falls over it that way."

"It's a lightish sort of whitish, greenish-grey," said one.

"It's what I call a watery eye," added another.

Frank had always called it a beaming eye.

"And the eyebrow is too much arched, said a third.

"And her eyes are too large," added a fourth; "out of all proportion, because her features are so small."

"Small features are sometimes pleasing," said Miss Carlton; "but there is no room in a small countenance for expression. The features have no play."

"But her eyes suit the colour of her hair," suggested Louisa, wishing to appear amiable.

"Her hair is not very light," said Miss Carlton.

"Can you call it brown?" asked another sister.

"A sort of brown; but it would generally be called sandy."

"Not quite sandy, my love," observed the mother; "it has a tinge of red—not that I should call it red hair. You should never speak ill of people, my love, behind their backs."

(Frank began to be amused.)

"And she perks her head about like a peacock," said another sister, willing to throw in her mite.

"Or like one of the swans in the great pond,

looking about it," said another. (This was a mistaken hit.) The mother felt it.

"Don't you think her nose is very long and sharp?" sympathized Miss Carlton, in a pitying tone.

"Very!" chorused the bevy.

"Do you know, mamma," observed her eldest daughter, "Miss Lesley is a very nice girl, but really I think she is very affected."

"Oh, my love," smiled her mamma, "you must not speak so of your young friend. Mr. Coverley will think us quite censorious."

"I don't mean affected in everything, mamma, only she wears such tight shoes. I have often looked at them, and I'm sure she must suffer, and, perhaps, that's what makes her look so pale; they're such little mites of shoes. I'm sure they must be too small!"

"That is very weak-minded of her, to say

the least of it," said the mother. "I don't think, for my part, that small feet are a beauty. In the ancient statues the foot was always represented in proportion to the body, and is what moderns perhaps would call large, but it is more according to nature."

Frank could not resist his curiosity to throw his eyes on the locomotive pedestals of the plump bodies of the Miss Carltons; but those modest young ladies had curiously concealed them beneath their garments, although they were formed, rather liberally, after the models of the ancient statues so judiciously approved by their considerate parent.

"Miss Lesley's mouth—" one of the Miss Carltons was proceeding to remark, with that minuteness of analysis which young ladies sometimes practise towards the personal qualifications of an absent friend whose attractions in-

terfere with their own pretensions—but the prudent mother stopped the farther progress of the dissection. There was something in Frank's look which warned her that the conversation on that point had been carried far enough.

"Really, my dear girls, Miss Lesley is a very sweet girl, and she cannot help her little imperfections. But it is a sad pity she has neither fortune nor family. I am told that Mr. Lesley is plagued to death with poor relations."

Frank said nothing to this, and Lady Carlton was in doubt whether the sympathizing commiseration which she and her amiable daughters had expressed for the condition of the poor clergyman's daughter had produced a favourable or unfavourable effect. Shortly after, he took his leave, with a serious air,

leaving Lady Carlton to her contemplations, and himself and his character to the critical dissection of her daughters.

While this little drama was being enacted at the residence of Sir Matthew Carlton, the good clergyman and his daughter were sitting in the cheerful parlour of the little parsonage-house. The conversation, as often happened when Clara was alone with her father, fell on the subject of the heir of the Coverley estate, whom the rapidly declining health of Mr. and Mrs. Coverley seemed likely soon to place in possession, at an early age, of that desirable property.

"Eton has done Frank this good, on the whole," said the worthy clergyman to his daughter—"it has taught him to rely on himself, and to trust to his own resources. He is not afraid of encountering difficulties; that is

a great point. And that, I must confess, is one of the great advantages of a public school; it usually stamps a boy with a manly and energetic character. And if a lad has mental and bodily vigour to carry him safely through the roughness of the process, I don't know whether it is not, after all, the best school for a youth to be brought up at. But then, it is not every one that has Frank's mind and decision of character."

"Mr. Frank Coverley has great talents," said Clara.

"Yes, my love, and it would be a pity for him not to take advantage of them. Although he has no necessity for applying himself to what may be called merely useful studies, yet it is as well for him to know many things, in order that he may be better able to direct others. Learning always is most excellent, even when a good estate accompanies it."

"The Coverley property is worth four or five thousand a-year, is it not, papa? I think I have heard you say so."

"Yes, my dear girl, it is a handsome property, and being mostly in land, it gives the owner of it a certain standing in the county. Besides, it entitles him to expect a suitable alliance, which would, of course, add to his fortune and his influence. 'Money makes money,' is a true saying."

Clara sighed.

"What makes you sigh, my love? There is nothing in the circumstance of the Coverley estate being a good property to make you melancholy. It can't affect us in any way, excepting so far as we must naturally feel glad that our young friend Frank has good prospects before him."

"Mr. Coverley is not of any particular high family, is he, papa?"

"I don't know anything about his family; but I don't suppose that he has any particularly high lineage to boast of, or all the world would know it, for people generally like to talk of their noble ancestors; not that I think the Coverleys have any pride of that sort—I'm sure Frank has not."

"But perhaps his father has, or his mother. Mr. Coverley's uncle was only a tradesman, papa, was he not?"

"He was a merchant, I believe, my dear, who made a fortune—at least I think I heard Mr. Coverley once say so; but I never observed that he talked of him otherwise than his uncle, from whom he inherited the estate."

"A merchant—that's almost a tradesman!" said Clara.

"No, my dear, not the same; the world attaches a different position to a merchant

from that of a tradesman; for instance, we use the term, 'respectable tradesman,' but we may say, a princely merchant."

"But still he was only a merchant," persisted Clara, rather pertinaciously.

"What makes you so earnest, Clara, about the rank of Mr. Coverley's uncle?"

"Nothing, papa;—only it's different being of an old county family of rank, and being the nephew of a merchant, though he was a little rich."

"I can't understand what you are driving at, my love," said the good and simple clergyman—"and you are painting that rose green; why, what are you thinking of?"

Clara blushed—"Nothing, papa!"

There was a pause. The Pastor was soon abstracted in a deep disquisition concerning the date of the reign of one of the Pha-

raohs, which absorbed for the time all his faculties.

Clara laid down her pencils, and leaning on her hand, fell into pensive contemplation.

"Do you think, papa," suddenly resumed Clara, "that the Coverleys are of the same rank as Sir Matthew Carlton's family; wasn't Sir Matthew a friend of the king's, and wasn't he always with the king, when the king was at Weymouth? It was said he might have had a peerage."

The words "king," and "lived," were the only sounds that reached the worthy divine's ear, wrapped up as he was in his beloved study of ancient history; and from their association with his current thoughts, rather than with his daughter's inquiry, he said—"Yes, my dear love, I think it is clear that it must

have occurred about two thousand years before the Christian æra. Pharaoh——"

"Pharaoh, papa! Two thousand years ago! I was not talking of Pharaoh—it was Sir Matthew Carlton and the king."

"Dear me, I thought you were speaking of the kings of Egypt. Sir Matthew Carlton—yes, my dear, a most gentlemanly man, and an excellent friend for Frank; he likes Frank very much. And an amiable family—a very pleasant family, too; the girls well brought up. Those girls will make good wives, my dear. That pretty Louisa is certainly the belle of the county."

"I think I will take a walk in the garden," said Clara, starting up, and oversetting her palette and water colours.

"Do, my love; you ought to be more in

the air; but you needn't be in such a hurry. I think you have broken your paint-box.

"Well, I declare if there isn't Frank Coverley! How fortunate! I wanted to have a little chat with him about the Pharaohs of Egypt. I observe, my love, that he is very fond of walking over here to puzzle out with me some parts of the obscure passages of the history of the elder Pharaohs. You ought to know something about them yourself, my love, for I suppose Frank naturally talks to you about the subject of our studies. Here he comes—the fine fellow! galloping, as usual, as hard as he can ride. He has come from the direction of the Carltons. I suppose he has been there all the morning, passing his time with the girls. Louisa and Frank would make a handsome couple; don't you think so, Clara?"

Poor Clara burst into tears.

"Dear me!" said the wondering clergyman, shutting his book, and abandoning his study of the ancient Pharaohs, to inquire into the modern history of his daughter's nervousness; "what has come over you, my dear Clara?" But Clara had fled to her own room, leaving her father to receive Frank alone.

In the solitude of her chamber, she began to commune seriously with her own heart. Ashamed of her weakness, and particularly of having given way to her feelings before her kind and affectionate parent—whom she would rather have suffered death than have grieved in the slightest degree—she endeavoured to recover her composure, in which, but not without a considerable effort, she succeeded.

She hesitated for some time whether she should remain in her own room, or go down with her red eyes to greet their visitor. But

after a rapid consideration, she thought it would look odd if she stayed away; besides, she was fearful that in her absence, her kind, but artless parent might take occasion to mention to Frank her recent nervousness, and detail to him, perhaps, the conversation which had preceded it. Blushing, though alone, at the idea that a secret, which she flattered herself she had long successfully concealed within her own bosom, might be revealed to the person who, above all others on earth, she desired should for ever remain ignorant of it, she endeavoured to efface the marks of tears from her eyes, and, with a light step and a forced cheerfulness, descended to the parlour.

CHAPTER IX.

" ANGELIQUE.

And have you felt a void in your sick heart,
When he, whose honeyed accents and sweet words,
Have held your too enraptured senses tranced,
Wrapping your soul in blissful ecstasy—
Seeing no form but his, hearing no voice!
When he, I say, has gone, and left you chilled,
As if the sun had shut its light from you;—
Then have you felt as if the world was not
As if your very soul had fled away
With him, whose eyes are the sole orbs
Whose light could form your heaven?

FRANCESCA.

I fear 'tis true!

ANGELIQUE.

Why, then, you love."

" THE SPANISH MAIDEN."—*Old Play.*

POOR Clara had been sadly beset of late by conflicting emotions. She had known Frank

from his earliest years, and had enjoyed with him that intimacy of childhood which exists between brother and sister. But although the familiarity which had been their habit from their youngest days was continued to the present time, the instinct of female delicacy had gradually thrown a reserve around Clara's demeanour, which plainly marked the change from girlish simplicity to womanly propriety.

The conduct of the young girl was influenced, also, by other considerations. Although her life was secluded, she had been well educated, and she possessed more than the ordinary learning and accomplishments of women. Besides, she had mixed in the best society of the neighbourhood; for although her father was poor, his position in society, as a minister of the church, was, without question, that of a gentleman; and he was personally

liked for his mild and unassuming manners and benevolent disposition.

Clara, therefore, had not been without opportunities of comparing herself, her position, and her prospects, with those of other young women; nor could she avoid making the same estimate of the position of her old playfellow, Frank Coverley. These comparisons were painful to her. She could not disguise from herself the fact that, in a worldly point of view, she would not be considered as an equal match for the heir of the Coverley estate; and the claim which her signal personal attractions and mental accomplishments conferred on her, of being worthy of an alliance with the richest and highest in the land, was underrated by her modesty, and paralysed by her fears.

Neither could she conceal from herself the fact, that, although Frank Coverley treated

her with the familiarity and affection of a brother, he had never made any explicit declaration of his feelings; and, in truth, although his affection for her was strong and sincere, the word "love" had never passed his lips. It might be, she sometimes thought, that, as Frank had been loving her all his life, he never thought it necessary to tell her so in any particular and formal manner. But then she reflected that Frank was more than twenty years of age, and although he was still a very young man, she felt that he could not but be aware of the practice prescribed by immemorial usage in such cases.

On the other hand, she fretted herself with the apprehension that Frank's regard for her was merely the affection of habit, and did not reach that point of poetical enthusiasm which is the type and test of an exclusive and all-

absorbing passion. Again, she was bewildered and vexed with other misgivings. She was jealously sensitive of the suspicion of being actuated towards Frank by mean and mercenary motives. She had frequently been present at conversations on the subject of match-making, when the entrapping of young men into matrimonial engagements was made the subject of the bitterest ridicule and sarcasm; and she trembled, lest by possibility the accusation should attach to her of encouraging Frank's intercourse with her father and with herself, with the design of inveigling him into an unequal alliance.

All these considerations embarrassed and troubled her; and when to such sources of vexation was added the circumstance of Frank's frequent visits at Sir Matthew Carlton's, her uncertainty and uneasiness affected

her tranquillity so painfully, that she was apt to fall into fits of melancholy and despondence, which caused the greater sorrow to her affectionate parent, as he was utterly unable to account for the reasons of such depression.

It was in such a mood of nervous anxiety that she descended from her chamber to meet Frank Coverley. In the meanwhile, the worthy clergyman was rejoiced at the presence of Frank, as he wished him to share his delight at having conquered a difficulty that had long distressed him—the chronology of the ancient Pharaohs. Being eager to communicate his success to his young friend, it was with an irresistible impulse that, in shaking Frank's hand, he pulled him towards the table, on which were spread out the dusky volumes which formed the materials of his erudite lucubrations.

As Clara entered the room, Frank was listening with respectful attention to the expounding of the pleased old gentleman, and she glided in so gently that she was unheard by Frank and unnoticed by her father.

She had prepared a composed countenance for the interview, and a studied demeanour, which she thought proper and necessary under the circumstances. And as she had concluded at once—with the quick jealousy of modest diffidence—that Frank had come fresh from his admiration of the fascinating Louisa, in the house where that beauty reigned supreme, she had hastily arranged a few appropriate phrases, calculated, as she considered, without unbecoming coldness, to mark the distinction between the habitual cordiality of an old playfellow and the evidences of a more tender feeling. It was with no slight mortification,

therefore, that she found her entrance unheeded.

"He cannot care much about me," thought Clara, "or it would not be necessary for me to announce myself to make him sensible of my presence." And, thinking this, she sighed.

Frank turned quickly round, and met the eyes of Clara. His mind being yet full of the scene he had recently witnessed at the house of Sir Edward, at which Clara had been so gently picked to pieces by her dear friends, he could not resist the inclination of a fresh examination of the form and features which had been so disparaged; and he prolonged his look anxiously and earnestly.

"He is comparing me with Louisa," thought Clara.

But the whole of the comic caricature indulged in by the Miss Carltons and their mother recurring to his mind's eye, he could

not repress the smile which gradually stole over his countenance, as he compared the Miss Lesley of their dissection with the lovely object which stood before him; and at last, being no longer able to restrain himself, he burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter.

The clergyman looked up in amazement; Frank continued to laugh; and Clara, being predisposed to take alarm, felt still more hurt at the exhibition of merriment so little in unison with her own feelings.

"Mr. Coverley is merry to-day," she said, in a tone of pique.

Frank laughed the more. To be called *Mr.* Coverley, and for Clara to be offended because he was in a laughing humour, seemed to him very droll. But Clara's feelings had been too highly excited previous to Frank's arrival to enable her to bear an ad-

ditional wound. She sunk into a chair, and tears rose in her eyes.

Frank's laughter stopped immediately.

"My dear Miss Lesley," said Frank, "what is the matter?"

"It's *Miss* Lesley," thought Clara. "The dream is all over!"

"Nothing," said Clara. "I believe I am not very well to-day."

Frank looked to Mr. Lesley for an explanation.

"I have been explaining to Frank, my love, that just before he came——"

"Good Heavens! Papa;—you have never been explaining to Mr. Coverley (*Mr.* Coverley again, thought Frank) what passed before he arrived?"

"Why not, my love? I am sure Frank takes the greatest interest in it, and he has

been making a declaration which I am sure will give you the same delight as it did me."

"A declaration!" gasped Clara, blushing intensely, and unconsciously rising up.

"Yes, my love, a declaration of his intention—that is, a sort of proposal, if circumstances will allow it, to take a journey to Egypt."

"Take a journey to Egypt!"

"Yes, my dear girl, take a journey to Egypt, and explore the tombs of the ancient Pharaohs!"

"Was that all?" muttered Clara.

"No, my dear, not all. He intends to visit the Holy Land, and try if he cannot discover among the depositories of ancient learning which exist in that interesting country, some undetected manuscripts which may happily clear up altogether the obscurity which

still hangs over the history of the earlier times of those sacred regions. I will go and look for the map in my study, and see if I cannot trace his route at once."

The time which it took her father to communicate this exceedingly unexpected intelligence, was sufficient to enable Clara to recover herself; with a voice tolerably calm, but with a countenance still suffused with blushes, she turned mechanically to Frank, and not knowing what else to say, asked him "When he intended to go?"

Frank, on his part, was at a loss to comprehend the reason of the excessive emotion betrayed by Clara at her father's announcement of his imaginary travels; but as he regarded her, he thought she never before looked so beautiful. It was with the feelings of admiration, therefore, heightened by long

cherished affection, that he approached her and took her passive hand.

"My dear Clara," (the hand trembled,) "I am sure that something has happened to discompose your spirits. If it is anything that you can communicate to an old friend, I am sure you will not conceal it from me."

Clara was embarrassed. She longed to turn the conversation to the subject on which she had touched with her father, but she feared to approach it, lest she should betray her secret motive. But while she paused and pondered, Frank happily came to her relief.

"I wish," said he, "that you could have been at Sir Matthew Carlton's to-day—that is, invisibly,"—("I wish I could," thought Clara,)—"and I'm sure you would have heard some fun that would have dispelled all dull thoughts."

"You have been amused, then?" said Clara.

"Amused! I never was more amused in my life! We have had playing, and singing, and all sorts of fun!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And I assure you," said Frank, with mock solemnity, and taking Clara's hand to add earnestness to his communication, "they all have a regard for you which you little think of."

"Indeed!" repeated Clara, but without withdrawing her hand.

"However," said Frank, considering, "these things had better not be repeated; and besides," he added, "it is not fair to retail conversations."

"I am not at all curious," said Clara, dying with curiosity.

"I wish, though, you had heard Louisa sing. She really sings beautifully!"

Clara withdrew her hand—not pettishly, but softly—and quietly drew on her gloves.

Frank did not seem to notice this silent expression of feeling; and stung with this indifference, Clara mentally determined never to allow that familiarity again, but proceeded with his description.

"And she draws exquisitely!"

"Does she?"

"Oh, beautifully! and, by-the-bye, her mother has had her portrait taken—a miniature. It is done exquisitely. Her eyes—you know she has bright hazel eyes—very large—they seem to look at you out of the picture!"

"You have got it with you, of course?" in a slight, a very slight tone of despite, said Clara, for this flagrant evidence of Frank's

admiration of Louisa Carlton was becoming almost unbearable, and she could scarcely trust her voice to utter those few words.

Frank went on, without stopping to answer a question which seemed to him quite unnecessary.

"They shewed me a drawing of hers, too, very prettily done—an Italian village—about the size of—no, not so large as this—about the size—" searching among Clara's sketches for a comparison which she had not the presence of mind to prevent—"Why, what is this?" said Frank, pulling out a likeness of himself, which had formed the grateful task of Clara for weeks and months to finish and embellish. "Why, I declare, if here is not a likeness of me! Is this your painting, Clara?"

"Give it to me! give it to me!" cried Clara, recovering at once her voice and her animation.

"Give it to me. Oh! Mr. Coverley, Frank, Mr. Frank Coverley, give it to me, I say!"

But Frank held it at arm's length, and regarded it triumphantly.

"Give it to me, sir, I insist," said Clara; "you have no right to pry into my secrets."

"Sir! Pry into secrets! Secrets—Clara—between you and me! Why what has come over you? Clara, my dear Clara, what has happened? We have been friends and playfellows too many years for such words to come from you without a meaning. For Heaven's sake, tell me what it is. And why do you look at me in such a strange way? Has anything happened to distress you or your father? Surely you can speak to me as an old friend."

"Frank," said Clara, with a great effort,

and with the paleness of excessive emotion, "I *will* speak to you as an old friend."

Frank waited with serious anxiety to hear; but Clara could not for some time determine on what she ought to say; and when she did, she could not make up her mind how to say it. But an idea came across her, that it would be better, under the circumstances, which appeared so clear, from Frank's description of his visit at the Carltons', and of his undisguised admiration of Louisa—(of her playing, and her singing, she mentally enumerated, and her painting, and her portrait—and here she felt an inclination to tear Frank's in pieces—and, above all, her eyes!—yes! her eyes! hazel! large! and brilliant!)—it would be better, she thought, to withdraw herself from the neighbourhood for a time, until Frank's

union with Louisa—but she could not bear to dwell on that idea.

Frank waited patiently, and with a look of the kindest interest for her communication.

"Can he suspect," thought she, "the reason of my weakness?" She abruptly broke silence—

"I am going to my aunt's."

"Going to your aunt, my dear Clara; what are you going to your aunt's for? Is she ill?"

"No."

"Then what are you going to your aunt's for?" repeated Frank; "and why should that affect you so much, if you did go. You may go or stay, as you like, I presume?"

"Oh! yes. But I think change of air would do me good. Our little cottage is very confined."

"Then why not come over to us? To be sure, the distance of a little more than a mile would not be much change of air; but the house is large enough, and it stands much higher than this. I will tell my mother, and she will ask you to come and stay with us."

"Not for the world! Anywhere but there!"

"Why, Clara! what have we all done to offend you?"

Poor Clara did not know what to say. She had only made matters worse by her attempts at explanation: she was silent.

"I wish I was a few years older," said Frank, as if thinking aloud; "although my father and mother are not in good health, I would ask their consent at once."

"To go to Egypt?" said Clara, with a forced smile.

"Go to Egypt! Clara, I do believe you

have lost your wits this morning. No: I mean I would ask their consent to my marriage—then you could almost call our house your own."

Poor Clara gasped for breath. This was more than unkind—it was insulting! To declare his intention of proposing to Louisa Carlton—and his impatience to do it—and to declare it to HER! It was more than the powers of endurance could bear! The poor girl struggled hysterically for a brief space, and essayed to speak; but her voice stuck in her throat; she raised her clenched hands convulsively to heaven, as if imploring assistance in the extremity of her agony—and burst into a passionate flood of tears!

Frank's love for Clara was ardent but respectful. But the sight of her tears, and her convulsive sobs, which seemed to burst her

bosom, overcame all feelings of conventional propriety. Clasping her in his arms, and seizing her hands, while Clara struggled indignantly to disengage herself from his embrace, he adjured her to tell the reason of her strange emotion!

"Clara! Clara! For God's sake tell me the meaning of this frightful suffering! Do I not deserve your confidence? Who has known you as I have? admired you as I have? loved you as I have? What is there so dreadful in my desiring our speedy union? Have we not loved each other all our lives? At least, I have loved you—though I never could find words to tell you how fondly and how dearly! How do I offend you by wishing for an early marriage?"

"With me?" cried Clara, wildly; "with me? Do you really mean me?"

"With you, dearest Clara—why do you speak so, and look so strangely? Who is there in the wide world whom I could love as I love you?"

"With me? I thought you meant—I thought you said Louisa Carlton!"

"Good God! how could you suppose so?"

"Then it is me, indeed!" sobbed Clara. "Oh, God! what I have suffered! And am I doing right to permit it, even now?" But the revulsion of feeling and the struggle of conflicting emotions was too great and too sudden. A tide of bewildering thoughts rushed on her with overwhelming force. She had strength only to clasp Frank's portrait to her heart, and then sunk fainting on his bosom.

The good clergyman, in the meanwhile, had traced Frank's journey to the Pyramids with much precision, and returning with the map

in his hand, to communicate the satisfactory information to his young friend, he beheld his daughter lying insensible in Frank's arms, who was covering her frantically with kisses.

"Bless me!" said the Parson.

CHAPTER X.

"INQUISITOR.

Where be your thumb-screws? Set the wheel in sight—
Heat hot your pincers—make the furnace glow.
If there be feeling in his stubborn flesh—
If limbs will writhe, bones ache, or wrench'd joints crack—
If quiv'ring nerves will shrink at bleeding eyes,
Digg'd out with red-hot prong from madden'd scull,
I'll tear the secret from him!

MASK.

We'll spare no skill. If hemp and screw will hold,
We'll squeeze his very thoughts from out their cells!
But I have known the wretch to whom CONFESSION
Were worse than direst tortures of the rack!

INQUISITOR.

Prepare!"

"THE VICTIM:" *A Tragedy.*

"MR. COVERLEY," said Mr. Lesley, gravely, when Clara had retired to her room.

"Call me Frank."

"Well—Frank. I was not prepared for this, Mr. Frank Coverley."

"What is there so dreadful in my loving Clara?"

"Yes; you may love Clara—I always thought you did, but not in this way."

"How do people love, then?" said Frank, laughing; "I dare say the ancient Pharaohs loved much in the same way."

"Mr. Frank Coverley, this is no time for jesting."

"I am not jesting," said Frank; "I am in earnest. Didn't I show it?" he was about to add, but the seriousness of Mr. Lesley checked him.

"Of course you are in earnest," proceeded Mr. Lesley, with mild dignity. "Sir, if you were not in earnest——but I am old and a

minister of the gospel. Frank, what have you done? What will your father and mother say to this?"

Frank hesitated. "My father and mother, Mr. Lesley, would never have encouraged my intimacy with your daughter if they had not been prepared for the inevitable consequence. How could I know her—see her almost every day—regard her from childhood with the strongest and purest affection—and not love her as I love her now!"

"I ought to have been prepared for this," said the good clergyman, with a sorrowing air; "and I ought—yes, I ought—to have provided against it. Even now, it is not too late. It shall never be said that Clara Lesley inveigled the heir of an estate into a clandestine attachment!"

"And it shall never be said that Frank

Coverley broke the troth that he plighted, or forfeited his word!"

The clergyman was touched. He made an involuntary movement towards Frank; but the dust, or the light ,or something, affected his eyes, and he was obliged to stop to wipe them. But after a few resolute short coughs he recovered himself.

"This must be looked to at once," he said, going to the little hall, and taking his hat and stick.

"Where are you going?"

"To your father, young man."

"Then I will go with you. I will just say one word to Clara——"

"No; your father first."

There was a resolute air about the mild pastor which imposed on Frank's impetuosity.

They left the house together.

Frank looked back only once; he saw Clara at her little window. She smiled, and shook her head. Frank made a gesture of decision, and they walked on in silence.

The clergyman paused at the threshold of the hall-door, and seemed irresolute. He felt that he was about to enter on a task of more than ordinary delicacy. What was he going to do? To ascertain Mr. Coverley's sentiments on the propriety of the marriage of his son with his daughter? To remove obstacles? To soften difficulties? What effect would it have on his daughter? Would it change Frank's determination? But his irresolution lasted only for a moment. His first impulse carried him on; he could not suffer it to be supposed that he had connived at the opportunity of his daughter's neighbourly intercourse with Frank, in order to take advantage of his

youth and inexperience to inveigle him into a match with his daughter. Frank was silent. They entered, and the clergyman inquiring for Mr. Coverley, at once entered on the subject of his visit.

"Mr. Coverley—I mean, my dear sir—I am come on a very painful matter."

Mr. Coverley started. The subject of his debts and difficulties rose to his mind, and he feared that by some accident the real state of his affairs had come to the knowledge of Mr. Lesley—and if to him, to others.

"I know it! I know it! Then the truth is out at last, and more misery must come! But I am glad that the terrible exposure is come from you—yes, you of all others. It is through you that the blow best might come, for from you may best be sought consolation."

Mr. Lesley drew himself up; the pride of

the man was wounded at this too prompt declaration of the extent of the calamity; but the duty of the minister of peace came to his aid, and he replied, with mild humility:—

"Mr. Coverley, I was not prepared to meet with this unmitigated expression of your opinion, but I assure you that any pain that you may feel at this unexpected discovery is more than equalled by my own sincere sorrow."

"My dear friend, this is most kind of you. But, although I may be blamed by some—and I knew that an end must speedily come to this delusive attempt at concealment—I am sure you will view my bitter regret and my deep sorrow—though now unavailing—with indulgence and commiseration."

"Regret," replied the clergyman, sorrowfully, "cannot prevent the evil that has been done; but the desire to do right, may, with

God's help, assist us to the remedy. My poor daughter!"

"Ah, poor Clara! she will feel it deeply."

"But that is not the question," added the clergyman; "my duty is at once to take a decided step, to prevent further involvement."

"You are right," said Mr. Coverley. "But in a case of such urgent difficulty as this—where matters have been brought almost to extremity—what can be done?"

"I have already determined," said the clergyman. "The right course for me to pursue is plain before me; and although it may not be completely successful, at least it will have the effect of putting an end to further personal communications. And time and absence may do much, even in a case like this."

Mr. Coverley was a little puzzled; and he was surprised to find the clergyman so well

acquainted with the urgent nature of his embarrassments, and so prompt to devise a remedy.

"My dear friend," he said, with the surprise which he felt depicted on his countenance; "what, then, is your suggestion?"

"That Clara shall go to her aunt, in Wales, immediately."

Mr. Coverley stared.

"Yes," said Mr. Lesley; "painful as it must be to me, my dear friend, and to my dear child, I am resolved. The best way of putting an end to this difficulty is for my daughter to go into Wales."

Mr. Coverley thought that the good clergyman's wits were wandering, or else there was some strange playing at cross-purposes.

Mr. Lesley continued—

"The attachment of your son to my daughter——"

"The attachment of my son to your daughter!"

"Assuredly, sir; you do not suppose that my daughter would be so far regardless of female delicacy as to indulge in an attachment that was not returned! The declaration which your son has made——"

"My son has made a declaration!"

"Yes, Mr. Coverley; when I returned from my study this morning, I found Mr. Frank Coverley—much to my surprise—indeed, my astonishment—" (here the worthy clergyman paused, for the scene which had met his eyes when he was about to explain to Frank his route to the tombs of the ancient Pharaohs, embarrassed the parson's powers of description)—"Yes, I found your son, sir, making a very decided declaration."

"And this is what you came to communi-

cate?" said Mr. Coverley, angry with himself at so nearly allowing his secret to escape, angry with Mr. Lesley for so nearly being made the confidant of his affairs, and not less angry with his son for being the cause of a fresh embarrassment.

"I *have* communicated it," replied Mr. Lesley; "and permit me to say, Mr. Coverley, that, seeing the sincere sorrow which I have expressed at the occurrence, and the desire which I evince to remedy the mischief so far as lies in my power, I did think that you would have received my communication in a more kindly spirit—but my visit is ended. I have thought it my duty to make you aware of the fact the moment it came to my own knowledge. I am a poor man, sir; I have never striven to be rich; my duties demand other thoughts. But it shall never be said

that Clara inveigled your son into an unequal marriage; nor shall my daughter ever wed in a family in which she is not received on an equal footing. Mr. Coverley, good morning."

"Stay, Mr. Lesley—stop a moment—let me collect my thoughts."

Bitter were the thoughts of Mr. Coverley at that moment. He had for some time past deluded himself with the hope that his son, from his supposed expectations, might be able to make some suitable match, which would, in some measure, stand him in stead, when the terrible truth came to be revealed. It was his last hope; he was tenderly attached to Frank; and it was not less the changed fortunes of his son that had broken down his spirits and health, than his own troubles and afflictions. Neither had he ever abandoned the

hope, that the parties by whose failures and flight he had been involved in his embarrassments, would, sooner or later, come forward to relieve him from his difficulties. But this information of his son's attachment to Miss Lesley, and of his declaration, destroyed at a blow that cherished expectation. He felt, also, that, even if he were to consent to the engagement of his son, it would be practising another deceit on her and on her father, unless he communicated to them the secret of his circumstances. And again, he considered that his poor son would have difficulties enough to encounter, without being encumbered in his struggle with a wife and helpless family. All these thoughts and considerations he rapidly revolved in his mind; and, overwhelmed with the perplexity of his position, with clasped hands, and troubled countenance, he exclaimed—

"No! never—never! It is a folly that I never can consent to!"

"Enough!" said Mr. Lesley. "It is what I expected, but I wish it had been more mildly expressed. Mr. Coverley, good morning."

Mr. Coverley, much to Mr. Lesley's surprise, clasped his hand fervently between his own; he seemed about to speak—he yearned to tell his friend the truth—but pride, and the habit of reserve, and the dread of the shame of the confession, held him back:—

"You would pity me if you knew all," he said;—and the good clergyman took his leave.

Frank had watched for the close of this interview with his father; but he quickly gathered, from the clergyman's countenance, that it had not been satisfactory.

"Mr. Frank Coverley," said Mr. Lesley,

"I expect that you will not visit my house until you hear from me again."

Frank's heart sunk within him at these words. He remained looking at Clara's father till he was out of sight, pondering on the important events which had taken place within the last few hours. But as he was not conscious of any wrong, and as he was by disposition and habit straightforward and decisive in his actions, he determined at once to speak on the subject to his father.

He found him still agitated, from his recent interview with Clara's father, and there was an expression of intense anguish on his countenance, for which his son was at a loss to account; for there was nothing that he could understand, in his engagement with Clara, of a nature to produce an effect so powerful of pain and disappointment.

It was some time before Frank essayed to speak, as, from love and respect for his father, he was desirous of conveying to him his own determination, which was fixed and unalterable, in the mode least likely to wound his feelings or to incur his displeasure. But while he was seeking for fitting words in which to express his resolution, his father suddenly put all attempts at appropriate phraseology to flight, by saying, in a tone, serious and emphatic:—

"Frank, I guess what you are going to say to me. But I tell you, at once, that it must not be. It would be a cruelty to you to countenance such an engagement. There must be an end, and at once, to this youthful folly. You are both so young, that there is yet time to prevent it from injuring the prospects in life either of yourself or of Miss Lesley. But here—it must end!"

Frank could not comprehend the meaning of this decisive prohibition, nor what his father meant by its being yet time to prevent any injury to his prospects or to Clara. What prospects had his father in view for him? Was his father thinking of an alliance with one of the daughters of Sir Matthew Carlton? And how would his engagement injure the prospects of Miss Lesley? Was there any other—any more wealthy or titled admirer suing for her hand? What did it all mean?

"Will you allow me to ask," said Frank, to his father, "if your objection to my engagement with Miss Lesley is on account of her father's humble circumstances, or his family? Surely you, my dear father, of all others, would not think the less favourably of Miss Lesley's merits, because of her want of for-

tune. Is there not enough on my side for us both?"

Frank had unconsciously touched the burning sore—the festering wound which was hurrying his father to the grave. He saw him writhe under his words like a victim at the stake; huge drops of sweat stood on his forehead, and his face was of ashy paleness. He regarded his son with a countenance, in which pride and shame and remorse were blended, in an agonising look, and, in a voice of the bitterest anguish, he exclaimed—

"And from my own child, too! Yes—all conspire against me! Friends—wife—child—all! But I tell you that it CANNOT be! There is a secret!—yes—a terrible secret! You must not marry Clara Lesley—it would be ruin to you both. It is impossible. Go—and dismiss it from your mind for ever. And now leave

me; I am not strong enough to bear these scenes. Leave me, and let me never more hear a word of this frantic folly!"

Frank was awed by his father's vehement and almost wild denunciation of his passion. Had it been his own happiness only that was at stake, he would have followed the dictates of his affection and his duty to his father, and would at once have ceased from further present importunity; but the happiness of another was involved, and that other the dearest to him on earth. He could not, therefore, retire from his father's presence, feeling an instinctive prescience of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of renewing the subject, without making an effort to learn the reason of his father's unaccountable determination.

"My dear father," said Frank, "I hope I have ever conducted myself with all respect

and obedience to your slightest wishes. I am sure I have always so endeavoured; and if I have at any time failed, it has not been from the want of the most sincere affection for you, who have always been to me so kind a father."

Frank perceived that his father was affected at this, and he continued—

"But I entreat you to consider that this is a question in which the future happiness of my life, as well as my honour as a gentleman, is involved—(his father looked uneasy);—and consider, that Clara and I have been companions and playmates from our infancy; that it has been under your own eyes that we have grown up together; that you yourself have ever been loudest in her praise—of her amiable disposition—her accomplishments—and her truthful character. Has she not often soothed you with her music, when your mind was sad with

some troubles that we could not guess at? Has she not attended you as a daughter in your sickness; and have you not almost regarded her as a daughter in your love for her?"

His father placed his hands before his eyes, and groaned aloud.

"I am aware," continued Frank, himself deeply affected by his father's sympathy, "that I am entirely dependent on your will, as I am aware that your estate is not entailed, and that it is at your disposition to do with it as you please—(his father shuddered convulsively);—but I trust entirely to your indulgence and generosity. Forgive me, then, if I now declare, in your presence, that, having entered into a solemn engagement with Miss Lesley, there is no power on earth that can compel me to go back. To her I have pledged my faith and my word, and that faith and

word I will keep, at the sacrifice even of rank and fortune, and of all other earthly good besides!"

"It is impossible, Frank—it is impossible. There is a secret!"

"What, then, is this dreadful secret, that cannot be revealed to your son?"

"I cannot—I cannot! It cannot be told now!" cried the wretched father, starting up in uncontrollable agony. "Would to God that it never would reveal itself! But it must come at last!—and then!—oh, God! This is more than I can bear! Death now would be a mercy!"

With these fearful words, which struck his son speechless with horror and amazement, he staggered from the apartment.

CHAPTER XI.

"SPIRIT.

Mark you that lonely youth, on yonder spot—
His soul all tenderness, himself forgot!
Ah! little thinks he of his future fate,
Nor knows the griefs that vex his mortal state!

GUARDIAN ANGEL.

'Tis best, good spirit. Man is born in pain,
And lives in sorrow, but lives not in vain,
For such is Heav'n's decree! His earthly part
Must purge its dross to cleanse the sinful heart:
'Tis ours to tend him—help his wavering will—
And breathe presentiment of coming ill."

"THE ANGELS." *A Poem.*

ON the evening which succeeded Frank's first day of trials, a gloomy dulness prevailed in Coverley Hall, for now the seriousness and

sadness of Frank was added to that of his parents.

His father seemed buried in the contemplation of some deep resolve; and his mother, whose delicate state had for some time past almost entirely confined her to her own apartment, but who on this evening had ventured down stairs, regarded alternately her husband and her son with the deepest anxiety.

Frank could not resist his inclination to see Clara before her departure to Wales. He quickly crossed the fields, and found her alone in the garden. With all the warmth of devoted affection, he repeated and confirmed his solemn engagement of the morning. He recounted to her his interview with his father, and he repeated his father's hints of some "dreadful secret" which acted as a bar to their union. They talked long and earnestly on this point,

losing themselves in all sorts of conjectures; but neither of them could imagine what the nature of this mysterious impediment could be, and they were far from guessing at the real cause.

Clara endeavoured to persuade Frank that it would be best for them both that she should be away for a short time. Her absence, she said, would remove a cause of irritation, and it might tend to soothe his father, and lead him to more indulgent feelings. Besides, she added, it would be the means of showing to the world, if the conduct of her father or herself were called in question, that there was no desire on their parts to hold Frank enthralled by an engagement which it might be considered he was too young to enter into. For her part, Clara fervently repeated, as nothing on earth ever could make the slightest impression on her

to the prejudice of Frank, the attempt to weaken her affection by removing her to a distance was altogether useless; that to Frank she had given her heart, and to him she would remain faithful in love and constancy to the last hour of her existence. Frank thought it right to mention to her that it was in his father's power to debar him from his succession to the estate; and his opposition to the match, he said, was so decided, that although it appeared to him quite unaccountable, it was necessary for them to be prepared for the worst.

Clara declared that, having given her heart to Frank, nothing on earth should induce her to give her hand to another, and that they must trust to Heaven for aid and guidance. But although she would never wed another, she warned him that she never would

unite herself with him without the approbation of her father and the consent of his parents.

Frank argued for a long time against this determination, but she was invulnerable to his reasonings; and although not unmoved by his entreaties and his prayers, she remained unshaken in her resolution.

He then said, that he was determined to make himself independent, by qualifying himself for some profession, so that, in the event of his father's displeasure cutting him off from the estate, he might not be destitute of all resources.

To this Clara replied, that she was too young and too little acquainted with the world to give advice on the subject; that she did not see the necessity of Frank adopting any profession, as she could not bring herself to believe that his

father could act so unkindly as to deprive him of the fortune, to the succession of which he had brought Frank up, and accustomed him to look forward to as a certainty. But she had often heard her father express the opinion, that no man ought to be without some profession or calling, according to his education and degree in life, which he might fall back on in case of unforeseen misfortune.

But on that point she protested, that if there was the slightest risk of Frank's engagement with her interfering so detrimentally with his prospects, she would request her father to write to Mr. Coverley, solemnly pledging her never to accept of his son's addresses—and to such a pledge, she assured Frank she would religiously adhere.

Frank did not pursue that part of the subject any further, although he mentally resolved

to qualify himself for the bar. He observed, that "of course Clara would correspond with him."

Clara reflected for a moment. She would not absolutely consent or refuse—she would be guided by her father. However, she added, smiling, she did not see how he could be prevented from writing to her; but, immediately correcting herself, said, not very decidedly, however, that she would not allow him to write to her, if disapproved by her father. After many further protestations on either side, and with such sealing of their mutual compact as is usual on such occasions, but which was conducted with much propriety, the lovers separated, after a few returns, only to mention some little circumstance which each had forgotten to say.

The next morning, Clara departed with her

father to Wales, for the purpose, as Miss Lesley gave out, of visiting a sick relation —a step which was viewed as a very proper and considerate proceeding, and which received the unqualified approbation of the Miss Carltons and their experienced mother.

Frank, on his way back, set his thoughts seriously to work to carry into effect his intention of adopting a profession—but, before the morning, events occurred which changed the current of his thoughts into a new and more serious direction.

During the short family meeting of that eventful night, Frank observed a something in his father's eye and manner which filled him with secret alarm. Mr. Coverley had taken leave of his wife and son in a way strange and unusual. His manner at such times was always affectionate—it was that night more

kind and caressing than had lately been his habit, but it was, at the same time, earnest and solemn; and there was an occasional wildness in his look which more than once startled Frank. As Mrs. Coverley's health required the presence of a female attendant, her husband occupied a temporary apartment on the other side of the passage.

According to Frank's custom since his mother's illness, he attended his father to his room, who seemed at first too much abstracted to heed his presence; but presently recollecting himself, he again wished Frank good-night, tenderly. He was leaving the room, when his father stopped him, placed his two hands on his shoulders, and regarded him intensely and sorrowfully, and made a gesture as if he was about to clasp his son in his arms; but he only sighed and motioned Frank to leave him. As

he quitted his father's chamber, he noticed that writing materials and lights were prepared on the little table:—the circumstance struck him.

He returned to the drawing-room. His mother had retired to rest, and he sat down alone in the spacious apartment.

There was an air of melancholy about its once cheerful hearth which chilled and distressed him. The stirring events of the day had raised in him an excitement of passion and feeling which had kept his pulse beating high with conflicting emotions—of love, of joy, of baffled hopes, and sudden fears, mingled with an indistinct presentiment, which haunted him like a spectre, of some coming misfortune.

His father's inexplicable injunctions, and his warnings of the morning had bewildered his brain. His faculties were confounded and

paralysed by too much thought. His head ached, and he felt that reaction of excitement which sickens the heart — when the spirits, worn out, leave the mind weakened in its powers, a prey to all sorts of fantastic and superstitious fears.

Frank was quite at a loss how to act. His fears were too vague to suggest any determinate course of action. He could not analyse his own thoughts or define his own forebodings of the indistinct coming of some disaster. At one time, he thought, he would consult his mother; but the weakness of her health, and her state of nervousness, deterred him from risking the danger which the communication of his own surmises might occasion. But his restlessness would not allow him to go to bed. Dismissing the servants, he determined to sit up—he could not have explained why,

but he gave way to a feeling which incited him to be watchful.

As it was the summer season, there was no fire; so that he was deprived even of that companionship. He took up a book, and attempted to read; but the words flitted before his eyes; and he could not carry the subject-matter in his mind from one sentence to another. Some impulse prompted him to go to his father's room; he softly ascended the stairs without a light, and listened at the door.

Nothing met his ears but the scratch—scratch—scratch, of his father's pen, who, it seemed, was busily engaged in writing. "But why," he asked himself, "should his father choose such an hour and such a place for a task which might be done better in the day time? And what all-important business could it be that required to be completed in such forced haste, and with

such privacy? His father had never written letters in his bed-room before—why on this particular night?"

He listened; he heard him breathe deep sighs—nay, groans of bitterest anguish—and then he would stop writing—and then he wrote again.

Was it right, he questioned himself, thus to intrude on his father's privacy—to watch his actions, and to steal a knowledge of his secrets? He could not resolve that question, and it troubled his fine feeling of delicacy.

But then the circumstance was so unusual! And his father's fearful exclamation of the morning, wrung from him by direst anguish! And his strange manner of parting for the night! What did it all threaten? The silence of the hour added fear to the half-formed suspicion. Was death, then, hovering near? Could

it be, that ——. He could not dwell on that idea. But an overpowering impulse prevented him from withdrawing.

He trembled, as he stood listening, with strained ears, to catch the slightest sound. But there was no sound but the scratching of the pen, and the rustling of the paper: but sometimes there was a pause, and then his father's sighs were heart-breaking. The whole house was buried in sleep. Only one creature, to Frank's rapt perception, was wakeful—his father! who was thus robbing nature of her rest—and for what purpose? With what intent? Frank felt his blood run cold with an indescribable apprehension.

The hour passed by as the young man stood at the door of his father's chamber; and still the pen was hard at work. Suddenly, there was a pause, and he heard his father rise up.

His excitement rose to a pitch of terror which made him fear that the beating of his own heart had become audible, and would betray him. His father approached the door, and he retreated. The door was opened; and Frank, stepping backward, retired behind the projecting angle of the passage. His father crossed slowly and softly to his wife's sick room; Frank heard him open the door almost without noise, and enter. Then he heard him gently kiss his mother, who, it seemed, did not wake—but she murmured something. His father then returned to his own room, and shut the door.

Frank resumed his station; he heard his father pace the room for a few minutes, and then the writing was recommenced.

He returned to the drawing-room. He was glad of the light; but he was exhausted; and he sat down leaning his head on his hand.

He had left the door open in order that no sound in the house might escape him; but as he sat alone, and a prey to dismal thoughts, the sight of the open door filled him with a strange sort of feeling. It seemed as if something was about to enter!

Frank was a stranger to ideal fancies, or imaginary dreads; but he could not bear that open door. For some time he sat as if enchained by some invisible restraint, and he felt a shivering of the skin, and a numbness of the feet and legs.

But at last, with an effort, he rose to shut the door; and the influence of his own motion, circulating his blood, roused his dulled faculties, and chased away the superstitious fear that was creeping over him.

He opened the door, with a disdainful sort of resolution, wider, and lent his ear, firmly, to

catch any passing sound. But all remained quiet.

Sitting down on the sofa by the side of the door, and close to it, he strove to collect his thoughts. But overwearied nature refused her aid; his indistinct imaginings grew more and more confused, and he fell asleep.

He awoke with a start. The candles had burned down to their sockets; and he found himself in darkness. Presently he heard a repetition of the sound that had awakened him; it was his father's footstep. He thought he heard a noise, as if his father had stamped his foot violently on the floor, or it might be the fall of some heavy body.

Without losing a moment, Frank rushed through the hall—into which the early morning light was gleaming—scaled the stairs—flew down the passage, and breathless, burst

into his father's room. He beheld his parent kneeling, with the aspect of a spectre, at the little table. The two pistols which usually hung over the mantel-piece, were lying before him!

The whole dreadful truth flashed across Frank's mind in a moment; and in the same instant he decided on his own course. Seizing the pistols, he cried out, "Thieves—thieves!" and discharged them through the window.

A loud shriek burst from his mother's room, so loud, so thrilling, so agonising in its peal, that the sound of the fire-arms was lost in its wild alarm. Frank hastened thither; his father followed him instinctively. The frightened attendant sprung up to her assistance, and catching hold of the light, held it to her face; but the shriek was followed by a still more frightful silence. The glazed eye of the hus-

band glared on the fixed features of his stricken wife—she was dead!

Nature could bear no more: he fell insensible on her lifeless form, while Frank, paler than the corpse he mourned over, by a powerful effort, braced himself to bear the terrible shock with calmness and fortitude, that he might be able to guard and succour his now dearer father.

With the assistance of the servants, Frank placed him on his bed, and remained to watch beside him till the arrival of their medical attendant.

Casting his eyes around, he saw many sheets of paper, covered with writing, the result, as he concluded, of his father's labours of the previous night. Hastily gathering them up, and averting his eyes from the paper, lest by accident he should become acquainted with his

father's secrets in such a manner, while he lay insensible and helpless, he folded them up, and enclosed them in a cover, sealing it with his father's seal.

After a little consideration as to how he should dispose of it with safety, he withdrew for an instant, and locked it up in his own bureau; then he returned to the bedside of his unconscious father.

CHAPTER XII.

"Life is a chequered scene to all on earth:
Mirth follows grief, and grief succeeds to mirth;
E'en as the globe revolves in ceaseless roll,
And light or darkness cheers or chills the soul—
Man is compounded both of good and ill;
Virtue and vice divide his fitful will.—
None are so good some blemish doth not blot;
None are so bad some good redeemeth not."

PRIZE ESSAY.

ON the noon of the following day, the family of the Carltons were assembled in the music-room; but the harp was mute, and the piano was left at rest, for an interesting and all-

absorbing topic engrossed the attention of its female members.

"Goodness!" observed Miss Carlton, who, in right of her seniority, thought it her privilege to speak first, "did you ever hear anything so dreadful! Sally says that Mr. Coverley first shot himself, and then his wife—no, first his wife, and then himself——"

"Now, there you're wrong," said one of the sisters, who made up for the loss of the first word by speaking most and fastest—"you are quite wrong; for the gardener told me, and he had it from Roger, who heard direct from Mr. Coverley's own groom, that it was Mr. Frank Coverley, who was going about the house—I'm sure I don't know what about, but we all know what young men are—and his father took him for a robber, and shot at him, and so the bullets—for the pistols were full of

bullets—killed his wife, and then Mr. Frank Coverley——"

"But that couldn't be," said another, "because it was the windows that were shattered by the pistol-balls; and Mrs. Coverley slept on the other side of the long passage. But it's very mysterious; somebody shot somebody, and either Mr. Coverley shot at his son, or the son shot at his father, for there was nobody else to shoot at. Why should they shoot out at the window?"

"It is a strange story," said a fourth, a young lady who was usually considered the sage of the family, from her writing prose essays for the poor, which assured them that they were made unhappy on earth on purpose, in order that they might be more happy in heaven, (which would make the change more pleasing,) and from her attending charity-

schools on Sundays, and inculcating on the little clump-a-lumps not to say, in answer to the question of "Who made them," that "It was not their daddy and their mammy." This precise young lady observed, with much wisdom, "It is a very strange story—very! But, for my part, I never believe half of what people say"—("It's always the worst half," whispered Miss Carlton to another sister)—"but it is well known that, for a long time, Mr. and Mrs. Coverley have been on very unpleasant terms together; so much so, indeed, as to sleep in separate rooms. I believe, mamma, it is quite unusual with married people to sleep in separate rooms, unless they quarrel dreadfully?"

"Quite, my dear; but Mrs. Coverley has been in very weak health for some time, that we all know. However, one thing is certain,

that the poor thing received her death-wound from her husband's own hand. My maid tells me that her shriek, when she received the balls in her heart, was awful."

"I do think," said Louisa, "that Miss Lesley is somehow at the bottom of it, for she left the cottage with her father before daylight, and Martha says, Mr. Lesley has taken her into Wales."

"Miss Lesley gone to Wales!" cried out all the family in a breath. "What has she gone to Wales for? How very extraordinary! What can be the meaning of it?"

The girls turned their eyes to their mother with an inquiring and peculiar look, and the two eldest exchanged glances of malicious meaning with each other.

"That's the most extraordinary of all!" said the mother, with an air of profound medi-

tation. "But it is not a subject for young people to talk of."

"And Martha says," Louisa hastened to say, proud of having the upper hand of the family in this particular piece of news, "that she knows for certain that Miss Lesley has gone to Wales for her health, to her aunt."

"Aunts are very convenient persons sometimes," said Miss Carlton, with much meaning; "especially when they live a long way off, so that other people can't observe them."

"My dear," said the mother, "this is not a delicate subject for young ladies to talk of. If Mr. Frank Coverley has been deceiving Miss Lesley, it's a very shocking thing; though it is just what might have been anticipated. Young men cannot be expected to be saints, and if Mr. Lesley would fling the girl in his

way, when he must have been aware that Mr. and Mrs. Coverley never would consent to such a preposterous match, why people must take the consequences. But I desire that nothing more may be said about the young woman by you, my dears. Young unmarried girls have no business with such things. Let the poor creature alone, and let her bury her disgrace in the obscurity which she has very prudently chosen. My dear girls, never be uncharitable, but always look on matters on the best side."

And with this moral observation the sententious mother broke up the conference for the present, leaving her five daughters in the most miserable state of curiosity.

In the meantime the news of Mrs. Coverley's death had spread through the neighbouring village, variegated with all sorts of additions

and embellishments, according to the taste or credulity of the narrator.

The coroner of the county, a sensible and respectable man, being perplexed with the strangeness and seriousness of the reports, waited on Sir Matthew Carlton, as a friend of the family and a magistrate of the county, and consulted with him how to act. The result of their deliberation was to call at Coverley Hall in a friendly way, and without any official parade, and see if they could render any assistance to the family in its sudden state of affliction.

They found Mr. Coverley too ill to be disturbed; indeed, he was lying on his bed, to which he had been removed, unconscious of what was passing around him. But Frank gave what appeared a perfectly satisfactory account of the transaction. He was alarmed,

he said, by noises in the house, and he went to his father's room to warn him of them, when, thinking he saw strange forms in the garden at that unusual hour, he seized his father's pistols and fired through the window—rather with a view, he added, to scare away any intruder, than with the intent of killing him; and he fired upwards for that reason.

The marks in the windows corroborated this account, and the story seemed probable and natural.

The nurse stated, that Mrs. Coverley retired to rest at a later hour than usual, and had remained calm and quiet during the night, and until the early morning. About that time, weary with watching, she (nurse) had fallen into a slight dose, which could not have lasted more than a minute, when she was roused up by the report of fire-arms, and the same instant

the deceased lady uttered a loud shriek and immediately expired. The poor lady, nurse said, had long been in a very feeble state, and she supposed the sudden shock from the noise of the pistol shots had produced a convulsion. After the shriek, she added, Mr. Frank Coverley and Mr. Coverley ran into the room, Mr. Frank first; and Mr. Coverley, when he saw that his wife was dead, fainted over her, as was natural; but Mr. Frank "did not take on so;" he seemed most anxious about his father.

The coroner expressed his opinion to Sir Matthew, in a short private conversation, that he did not see anything in the circumstances to render it necessary for him to disturb the feelings of so respectable a family, by instituting an official and public investigation—an opinion in which Sir Matthew concurred; and

shortly afterwards they took their leave, Sir Matthew earnestly pressing Frank to pay as early a visit as possible to his house. Frank returned to the sick bed of his father.

But the days of his unfortunate and suffering parent were numbered. The family apothecary called in the aid of the best practitioner within reach, who really was a clever man, and who did all that art could suggest to restore the sufferer to consciousness. But his skill was baffled by the obstinate state of paralysis of his patient. He could restore the breathing to a sensible activity, but he could do no more.

"Nature might make a rally," he said; but he communicated privately to his fellow practitioner his opinion that the case was hopeless. "Do you know of any mental trouble that could have reduced him to this state?"

"Nothing but the shock of his wife's death," replied the apothecary.

Frank, in a voice scarcely articulate, was particular in his inquiries as to the minutest things to be done for the restoration of his parent; and he called to his assistance the nurse who had so recently been the attendant of his poor mother—an experienced and trustworthy person, who had been present at Frank's birth, and who was sincerely attached to the family. But she could now do little more than weep.

But all human help was vain. Mr. Coverley rapidly sunk during the day; and towards the morning, Frank, alarmed at what the nurse feared were the signs of approaching death, hastily dispatched carriages to bring back the physician and the apothecary. The kindhearted nurse endeavoured to prevail on

Frank to leave the room in the meanwhile, and endeavour to take some rest, for his looks were wretched and haggard; but he refused, and remained watching over his sinking parent.

Two hours more passed away; the dying man then gave signs of motion. The nurse said that it was a last struggle of nature—the precursor of dissolution. But the motions of the dying man grew stronger and stronger; he opened his eyes, gazed on his son, and with preternatural strength—as the nurse described it—raised himself up. Frank's feelings almost overpowered him; but fearing to disturb his father's last moments, although he felt almost suffocated, he mastered his emotions, and clasped his father's hand. It was cold and clammy.

An overpowering passion now seemed to animate the dying man. Thrice he essayed

to speak, but there was only a gurgling in his throat; he stretched forth his arm, as if imploring Heaven to grant him one moment of strength to communicate some oppressing secret to his son; he struggled with a desperate effort—but that struggle was his last. His last act was to open his arms to his son. Frank clasped him to his bosom; and now the long pent up tears could no longer be repressed, for, as he held his parent clasped, he felt the arms that embraced him relax—fall down; the body that he supported became pliant—sunk back—it was over; the vital spark had fled! There could be no mistaking that cold, fixed aspect of death. Frank sunk beside the corpse, still clasping his father's hand—his dear father, dearer to him from his sufferings—now dearer to him from his loss!

It is impossible to describe the intensity of that young heart's suffering!

A raging delirium was the consequence, and the same men of medicine attended the surviving member of the family who had administered their ineffectual aid to the dead! They did not arrive until after the death of their patient, and the apothecary and his colleague sat down in the dining room—to which the butler had brought, from habit, the usual refreshment—to talk over the affair. There was something so melancholy in the house of death; the calamity had been so sudden, and the delirious sorrow of the young man was so touching, that it was with difficulty the apothecary could bring himself to partake of the morning meal.

"It is a sad thing," he began, playing with

the drumstick of a cold roast fowl, in a melancholy manner, in his hand, "these two deaths —both at once! That young man was so attached to his father and mother! I've known him since he was a child."

"Very sad," said his brother practitioner, speaking with difficulty, with a mouth full of toast and butter,—"very sad—but it's what we must all come to! I had a case yesterday sadder than this, though; for there—the poor widow!—her husband died young—(a case of phthisis)—the poor widow, as I was saying, is left without a single penny to comfort her, and with a large family. I really couldn't take my fee, although I know it was unprofessional. There was something to cry for there; but here—a fat sorrow, you know, old buck, is a good sorrow! An old proverb, and a very true one—as I have had abundant opportunity

of observing. Another cup of coffee, little Bolus?"

"If you please; put a little more sugar in it. This business has quite upset me. I declare, I can scarcely eat! Let me send you a bit of this fowl, Doctor; here's a wing left; here are sausages, too—and very good they are."

"None, thank you; I'm doing very well with this cold beef and ham. I say, this young fellow comes into a good property. There's nothing like money, is there, my boy Blister?"

"It is a very nice property; four thousand a year good. I suppose we shall have a match, by and by, with the parson's daughter. Keep the world a-going, eh, Doctor?"

"The parson's daughter! I heard that young Coverley was engaged to one of the

Miss Carltons; that girl with the staring eyes. Sir Matthew has been here this morning. Nothing like looking out in time. Every one for himself in this world—eh, little Pill-box?"

"Mr. Honeywater, I wish you would not use nicknames in that way. It was all very well when we were young fellows at the hospital, but it's not the thing now. Besides, it makes ignorant people suppose that I really do send more draughts and things than they want."

"What! do you mean to say that you don't stick it in 'em, when you get a good job with a fat one?"

"Not more than others in the profession. But what can an apothecary do? People wont pay us for our time and trouble, and so we're obliged to get paid through our

physic. But never mind that. Any bad cases lately?"

"Not one worth speaking of—just the old cases; people will stuff themselves, and then they come to us to cure them of the consequence of their greediness. This poor man's is the worst that I have had for some time—that is, so far as the result is concerned. The poor gentleman there"—pointing towards the part of the house where its deceased owner was lying—"gave us no time to do anything."

"And what do you really think was the cause of his death?" inquired the apothecary; "people, you know, will be asking, and it would be best for us to give the same opinion."

"Upon my life, it's difficult to say exactly; perhaps it will be best to set it down as an affection of the heart."

"I've no objection," said the apothecary; "it's a very good reason to give; and, indeed, I often give it in my own practice, as I find that people like it; and it's ascribing an out-of-the-way sort of aristocratic cause for a death; and it's pleasanter, too, for the women to talk of. They don't like to have it said of them that they died of diseases in their livers and kidneys and that. But an affection of the heart is a genteel sort of thing to die of, particularly for young ladies."

"The shock of his wife's dying," resumed the Doctor, "no doubt, helped to the poor gentleman's sudden death. But between you and me, I never knew a case in all my practice in which such a circumstance produced, by itself, the fatal result which has taken place in the present instance. Indeed, I have sometimes known it to have quite a contrary effect."

"That's true enough," observed the apothecary, for I myself have known many cases in which the patient enjoyed as good, nay, better health and spirits than before, from some sort of reaction, I suppose, in the system."

"It is remarkable," replied the Doctor; "and it shews how Providence 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' as the saying is, but I never knew a husband die of grief for the death of his wife."

"Talking of wives," said the apothecary, "I assure you it is quite a mistake to suppose that young Coverley is booked for one of the Carlton girls. I know that he is over head and ears in love with Lesley's daughter. Any body can see that, except her father, who is always poring over his Greek books. And the young folks—of course, they suppose that it is impossible for any one to suspect them of

loving each other. It's always the way in such cases. But that Miss Lesley is a very superior girl, and, depend upon it, we shall see her mistress of this place."

"With all my heart—it's no affair of mine; but there were designs on foot—that's all I can say. And now, I must be off. This country practice, after all, is very wearing; but we must work to make the pot boil. By the bye, I'll pop in on old Colonel Yelloley as I go home; he is always glad to have a visit, though he is rather a queer fish to deal with: I look on these East Indians, with their whims and their rupees, as godsends sent by a special providence for the sustenance of the profession. And I'll call on that poor widow as I go by. Poor thing! she was quite heart-broken when I left her, and one of her children is in a bad way. A friendly

word and a kind look cheer up at such times —and it's not far out of my way. So saying, the two friends left the house, giving directions to the nurse—who was now transferred to Frank, to be very careful in her attendance—to let him drink plentifully of toast and water—(the apothecary promising to send some draughts immediately, to be taken every half hour if the patient felt inclined)—and not to leave him for a moment.

The same evening brought another visit from Sir Matthew Carlton, who had been informed of the melancholy death of Mr Coverley, and who, after a consultation with Lady Carlton, took on himself, in the absence of any relative of the deceased—and Frank not being in a condition to give orders—to make arrangements for the double funeral, which he directed

to be conducted in a manner suitable to the rank of the deceased, as one of the principal gentlemen in the county.

In the meantime, events were preparing in London, of which poor Frank was quite unsuspicious. Those respectable functionaries, Messrs. Huntham and Skinnom, were already on the alert. It was the former of these worthies who, four days after, first caught the news of Mr Coverley's death in a provincial paper.

He immediately ran with it to his partner.

"I say, Skinnom, Coverley's off."

"Off!" exclaimed Skinnom, in a fright; "off! where?"

"Off the hooks."

"What—dead!"

"Yes: dead as mutton. That is, if this paper speaks truth."

"Let me look:—'Died on Friday last, Margaret, and shortly afterwards, from the shock of his wife's sudden death, John Coverley, Esq. of Coverley Hall. He is succeeded in his estate by his son, Mr. Francis Coverley, not yet of age.'"

"Oh! dead; depend upon it it's true. He is too important a person for a country paper to make a mistake about. We must look sharp, or the young 'un may bolt with some of the valuables."

"What bills have we got of his overdue?" asked Huntham.

"Lots: here they are; four thousand four hundred and eighty pounds; judgment confessed; execution taken out: here are the writs; all right. We mustn't lose any time in making a grab," added the gentle Skinnom.

"Who shall we send down?"

"Oh, Gripe; that's the man for a genteel

grab. Nobody like old Joe. He's a merry old rascal that, and takes a pleasure in introducing himself into the pantries of the nobs."

"Then do you see to it," said Huntham. "And I say, don't you think you had better go down yourself? In a friendly way, you know—and then you can see that there's no gammon."

"I don't mind; it's fine weather; and it will be doing the thing respectably; and perhaps it will prevent the young chap from running rusty. I am afraid, after all, we have done wrong in letting that Coverley have money so low as forty per cent. However, a good action——"

"Come—no gammon—call Ferrett."

The head clerk, Mr. Ferrett, was immediately summoned, and every precaution was taken to be armed with all the power of the law in the projected visitation.

The late events were treated in the county after the fashion of the place. The five Miss Carltons assembled in the music-room as usual, under the superintendence of their thoughtful mother.

"I am so sorry! mamma," began the sentimental Louisa. "Sally says that Mr Francis Coverley is not expected to live. He is quite delirious, and in a very high fever! Poor fellow! it is very hard to die so young, and when he is just come into his property too."

"You should not say Mr. *Francis* Coverley," propounded the blue-stocking of the family; "his father being dead, *he* is now *Mr.* Coverley."

"My dears," said Lady Carlton; "it really is a very shocking affair; and I confess I can't account for it. But one thing is quite sure; young Mr. Coverley comes into a very hand-

some property; and he is so nearly of age, that he may be considered to be in possession of it at once. Sir Matthew is attending to various little matters—the funeral, and that—and it is his intention to invite Mr. Coverley, immediately after the funeral, to spend a few days here; as change of scene, we think, may tend to cheer his spirits after his late distressing loss. My dear Louisa, how very red your nose is looking! I wish, my love, you would not keep pulling it about all day. Nothing looks worse in a young person than a red nose! Don't you remember how Mr. Coverley laughed at the villager with the red nose in your Italian picture?"

"If I was her, I would put a poultice on it," said Miss Carlton, maliciously.

"That would make it look like old Colonel Yelloley's nose," said another.

They all laughed at this.

"My dear girls," said the prudent mother, "I wish you would get rid of that habit of ridiculing people as you do; that is, respectable people. Colonel Yelloley is a gentleman of fortune, and he is not very old either, only fifty-six. I know more than one girl who would jump at an offer from Colonel Yelloley. If he has got rather a portly nose—I think myself it looks well in a man—he has money enough to gild it."

"Lord, mamma, I have heard of swallowing a gilded pill—but I never heard of swallowing a gilded nose."

The party laughed louder than ever at this sally, excepting always the sage of the family, who protested that she could not bear laughter at people for their personal defects; and that, in her opinion, Colonel Yelloley was a

very sensible man, and that she always listened to his interesting stories of India and the Punjaub with peculiar satisfaction.

The other four sisters looked at one another with mock seriousness at this moral rebuke, and hummed a little air a-piece, with humorous gravity.

"Where is Mr. Coverley to sleep, mamma, when he comes here? I shan't like to give up my room."

"There is no occasion, my dear, for any one of you to give up her room; but now I think of it, as Louisa's room looks into the garden, that one may be more cheerful for Mr. Coverley; and Louisa, my dear, you need not remove any of your books—that is, the best ones; I will look them out. And I think it would be as well to have your picture taken from your father's study, where it is only

getting spoiled with the dust, and hung up in your own room, dear; it will hide the black wall, and make the place look more comfortable. And perhaps you had better have it all done at once, my love, and then it will look natural and usual when he arrives. And do be more particular with your hair; it looks as if it had not been arranged since the deluge. I think curls become you best, dear; and don't wear short dresses, long ones are more becoming, particularly for you. And of course I need not remind you to be very attentive to poor young Mr. Coverley, and you can talk to him soothingly, and play and sing to him; as it is the duty of us all, my love, to endeavour to comfort the afflicted."

With this pious observation, the lady ended her admonitions, and dismissed her daughters to their amusements; but Louisa, from a laud-

able desire to improve her mind and understanding, set herself down to the harp and the piano for the remainder of the day, to practise the latest airs and songs of the season, it being notable that she selected in preference those of a plaintive and sentimental cast.

All this time Frank lay on his sick bed, insensible to the various plans and contrivances which were in progress in his favor or against him; and Coverley Hall, with closed shutters and silent inmates, presented the aspect of a house of mourning.

CHAPTER XIII.

"PHYSICIAN.

Restrain her not;—let sorrow find its vent
In tears—a woman's solace. Rather help
The bland restorative which nature gives
To over-bursting hearts.

COUNTESS.

Oh! tell me not to ease my heart with tears:
Tears cannot reach a grief so deep as mine!
Bid others weep—and with their tears wash out
Their lesser sorrows:—mine are all dried up!"

OLD PLAY.

THE tolling of the village bell, on the morning of the sixth day after the mournful deaths at Coverley Hall, announced that the mortal re-

mains of some pilgrim of the earth were about to be consigned to their last resting-place.

Certain signs and tokens which were visible in the conduct of the proceedings, manifested to the eye practised in funeral rites that the preparations were being made for the interment of a personage above the common rank; and the unusual width and amplitude of the grave indicated that the earth had been disturbed for more than one unconscious tenant.

The villagers suspended for a while their usual avocations, and grouped themselves in various parties to witness the pomp and solemnities of an aristocratic burial; and as the deceased gentlefolks had been most popular among the poor, from the unostentatious hospitality of the one, and the practical charity of the other, there was more than one honest rustic who regarded with sincere sorrow and

melancholy looks the preparations for the coming ceremony.

Among others, the disabled veteran, now so far advanced in years as to be himself trembling on the verge of his own grave, was the most conspicuous. He sat on an adjacent tombstone, his wooden leg projecting over the rank grass of the church-yard, and his crutch lying by his side. It was evident, from the short and irregular puffs that he emitted from his stunted pipe, that his mind was troubled by some unusual agitation.

"Well, Tom," said the grave-digger, as he rested on his spade, "this is a job that I didn't expect at this time. The poor lady and gentleman have had a sudden time of it. It's all very well when people go off in a natural way; but these poor folks have gone out suddenly, as one may say, like a lighted pipe that falls

down, and smashes all at once, and there's no picking up the pieces."

The grave-digger was a crony of the veteran's; he kept a shop in the village, where he sold odd things—gingerbread and sweet-stuff for the children, and pipes and tobacco for the seniors, which latter article he professed occasionally to supply to the crippled soldier at less than the common price.

The veteran took the pipe from his mouth, and laid it gently on the tombstone, the bowl resting against his crutch, so as to maintain it in a perpendicular position. He removed his cap with his only arm, and placing it on his knees, swept the grey hairs from his wrinkled forehead. His lips moved, but he did not speak; but as his eyes, already dim with age, grew moist, he put his military cap on again, settling it, but with difficulty more than was

his wont, over his streaming eyes. Then searching for his short pipe, he replaced it in his mouth.

"I see," said the grave-digger; "this has cut you up a bit, Tom; you have lost a kind friend in the good lady. But you're smoking, man, when your pipe is out! And I really must say, Tom Hodges, that it isn't regular and proper to smoke in a church-yard; a church-yard is a part like of the church."

Old Tom Hodges took the pipe from his mouth; inspected it as he would the touch-hole of a fire-lock; felt it with his finger—probed it—and threw it down.

"It's out—and soon I shall be out too—like a pipe that's smoked away. But Ralph, as to smoking in a churchyard! Lord help me—I've smoked in a bigger death-field than this—where thousands have lain dead, waiting for

their rough burial—and nobody found fault with me. But it's pleasanter to be buried this way, I think now. It must be a great satisfaction to have the prayers read over one in a regular way, with the parson at the head, and the clerk as fugleman, and one's friends drawn up in ranks to give a last salute. But I think we do it better in the army, when we have time, for then we fire three rounds over the soldier's grave, and the sound of the old firelocks pleases the poor fellow."

The grave-digger mused. He was not a philosopher; and the notion of its being soothing to a corpse to be buried in this or that particular way, puzzled him. He made no answer; but with his hob-nailed half-boots diligently cleaned his ancient spade, encumbered with the fat mould of the churchyard.

"They say Mr. Frank Coverley is very

bad," said he. "It would be odd now, if he was to die too! Deaths generally come together! And then, although it would be a sad pity, poor young gentleman—'the natural sympathy of the man struggling with the professional pride of the grave-digger'—I might say what few could say—that I have buried father, mother, and son in the same grave—it's not every one of my trade that could say that."

"He's a good-hearted and an open-hearted gentleman, is young Mr. Frank," replied the veteran; "but young hearts don't die of grief—they pine a bit—as he will, poor boy; but there's all the world before them; and God gives strength to children to bear the loss of their parents."

"That's true," returned the grave-digger. "I've buried many a child now in this church-

yard; there's one, poor little thing," said he, pointing with his spade, "lies there; and I've noticed that the parent sorrows long and long for its child, because, you see, it's not natural for the child to die. But when the parent dies, it's only in the regular way, d'ye see; and it is what is always expected. But there's Sir Matthew Carlton going by, to Coverley Hall, no doubt. It's he that has given directions about the funeral, and it's all to be done very liberal and handsome;—only private—so I suppose the hearse will soon be coming up, and I'll go and get a drop of beer and be ready."

In the meantime, strange and unexpected events took place at Coverley Hall.

Frank had been restored to mental consciousness by the skill and attention of his medical attendants, but he still remained in an

exceedingly weak state. The preparations for the approaching funeral, however, could not be concealed from him; and he insisted on being raised up and dressed, in order to pay the last melancholy duties to his deceased parents. His face was flushed, and his eye was restless, but he would not be restrained; and with the assistance of the domestics, he reached the drawing-room.

He had hardly been placed on the sofa, before a hasty arrival was announced, and in a few seconds afterwards a postchaise, containing Mr. Lesley, who had performed a hasty journey from Wales on hearing of the sudden death of Mrs. Coverley, drew up before the door.

Frank was alone; and on the worthy clergyman's approach, he trembled violently.

The good man shook him silently by the

hand. He knew that at such times words of consolation are useless; that grief must have its course, and that the pedantry of philosophy is useless in stifling the cries of nature.

"Where is Clara?"

"In Wales—and well. I left her, as you may suppose, sorely stricken with these sad tidings."

Frank burst into tears. His nerves had become so weak from his energies having been overstrained, and from the effects of his delirious fever, that he could not bear the slightest shock. He wept long and bitterly; the clergyman did not attempt to restrain him, but he held his hand and let nature take its course. Frank tried to restrain his tears—for it was not through such channels that his manly heart was used to express his sorrows—

but he could not stop them. They flowed faster and faster—and leaning on his old friend's shoulder, he gave way to the most passionate bursts of grief.

"I will not try to check your tears," said Mr. Lesley, "for they are natural. Even I—old as I am, and with calmness and resignation, which my duty teaches me to preach to others, —I, my dear Frank, can feel for you and weep with you. But I trust, my dear boy, that my lessons to you have not been so thrown away, but that your religion will make you believe that God has not permitted these sufferings in vain. Short-sighted mortals as we are, we see only part of the designs of Providence in its mysterious ways. We do not know what grief and pain, unimagined by us, may have been spared to your poor mother and your ex-

cellent father; nor how much greater sorrows the present seeming misfortune may have prevented."

"It may be so," said Frank, with the tears still falling from his eyes; "but I cannot reason now—I can only lament the strange fate of my dear father and mother."

The clergyman was silent.

It was not long before they were joined by Sir Matthew Carlton, who, out of respect to the deceased, had prepared for following in the funeral procession.

Frank briefly expressed his thanks to him for his kindness, and the three sat down together in mournful silence.

But their silence was presently disturbed by the bustle of a new arrival, and there was the sound of voices raised high in altercation in the hall, which jarred on the nerves of the

party assembled in the drawing-room, as unusual and indecent at a time of such solemnity.

The butler coming to the door, requested to speak to Mr. Lesley, and after a short absence the clergyman returned, and beckoning out Sir Matthew, they proceeded to the hall, which was the scene of the uproar.

They beheld there the whole of the servants staring, with wondering and frightened looks; and in the midst of them two men of singular appearance and repulsive aspect, who stood with a dogged and stubborn air, as if long used to such resistance as was now attempted, and hardened to all the rudeness and vituperation that could be cast upon them.

One of them, and, it seemed, the superior of the two, if superiority could exist among creatures of such a cast, was a short, stout

man, in a bright blue coat and metal buttons, red waistcoat, white corduroy breeches, and top boots. A large fat face, very round and very red, was surmounted by a white hat with a broad brim, which he was prevented, perhaps, from removing, from the circumstance of one hand being occupied by a thick stick of a suspicious looking character, and the other by a long, narrow slip of dirty paper, on which appeared certain mysterious hieroglyphics, partly in print and partly in a round sort of handwriting, and which he flourished in the faces of his antagonists.

His companion might have been guessed, from his personal exterior, to be a workhouse attendant at paupers' funerals. His body was very long and very thin, as if attenuated and drawn out by unceasing vigils and mortifying fasts, to which his lank lean face lent sym-

pathy. That visage was one which, once looked on, never could be forgotten; it was of that lantern-shaped and cadaverous cast which inspired the idea of its owner never being at rest. It was furnished with two small gray eyes, apparently not made to shut, and whose sharp glance seemed to take in and mentally to enumerate all the furniture in the place, and to have a cognizance of what was passing behind as well as before them.

A suit of exceedingly rusty black, shoes with dingy white stockings, and a marvellously dirty white cravat, which long usage had converted into a sort of rope convenient for the summary hanging of the wearer, completed the costume of the attendant satellite of one of the most celebrated of the executioners of the law.

Such were the uninvited visitors who pre-

sented themselves so unceremoniously within the domestic precincts of Coverley Hall.

"I have told the man," said the butler, whose dignity was monstrously offended at the presumption of the intruders, "that a funeral is now actually going forward, but he won't go out."

"No, no," said the fat bailiff, with a knowing look—"can't go. Very sorry to ill-convenience any gen'leman; but when once in possession, you know, it would never do to quit, 'cept according to law. Nobody can say that Joe Gripe ever let go what he once got hold of!"

"But who is this strange man?" asked Mr. Lesley, "and what does he mean by this improper language?"

"Mean!" said the doughty man of writs. "My meaning is generally understood easy enough—sometimes too easy, for the matter of

that. But I twig you're a parson, Mister—hope no offence—and not up to these here goes! And this gentleman p'rhaps is a relation of the family?"

"This gentleman," said Mr. Lesley, in a tone intended to cast awe into the soul of the familiar bailiff, "is Sir Matthew Carlton, one of the magistrates of the county!"

"A magistrate! Oh, then it's all safe! Sir, I make bold," shuffling his hat from his carroty head, "to ask your honor's protection. I've got a fi-fa (that's a writ of execution, as your honor knows) against these premises; and I call your honor to witness that I've got legal possession of the goods and furniture, me and my man. That's Tim, Sir Matthew, and a quiet genteel cretur he is, and never makes any unpleasantness to any gen'leman as is civil."

It is impossible to describe the various sensations of the party in the hall at this extraordinary announcement—the speechless wonder of the clergyman, the perplexity of Sir Matthew Carlton, and the amazement of the domestics.

"By whose authority do you come here?" asked Sir Matthew, at a loss to understand the meaning of such a proceeding in the mansion of a gentleman of the reputed affluence of its late master.

"You must be making a mistake, my good man," said the clergyman. "This is Coverley Hall. The late Mr. Coverley, I may almost venture to affirm, did not owe a single sixpence."

"No mistake at all, your reverence. My writ is against the goods of John Coverley, of Coverley Hall, and it's backed all regular by the county sheriff; and the sum is"—reading

from the narrow slip of paper—"four thousand four hundred and eighty pounds, eighteen shillings and a penny; and if the friends of the gentleman are agreeable to pay four thousand four hundred and eighty pounds, eighteen shillings, (never mind the penny,) and the expenses of the levy, why, then, in course, it will be all right, and I shall toddle off, me and Tim together. Mr. Skinnom is at the Green Dragon, just up yonder, and the matter can be settled at once."

"And who is Mr. Skinnom?"

"Not know Mr. Skinnom! Why, he's the partner of the great house of Huntham and Skinnom, of Cobwell Court, Dismal Buildings, the greatest and the sharpest house as is in all Lunnun for these here sort of goes."

Sir Matthew, without saying a word, immediately wrote a note to Mr. Skinnom, re-

questing that gentleman to do him the favour to come over to Coverley Hall, and mentioning the circumstance of the funeral of the late Mr. and Mrs. Coverley being in the act of taking place. He wrote a note, also, and despatched it by his own groom, requesting the immediate presence of his solicitor, who resided at the town about nine miles off; and after a consultation with Mr. Lesley, at which it was agreed that it would be better not to mention the occurrence to Frank until after the ceremony, they waited in the parlour for Mr. Skinnom.

That respectable gentleman was not long in arriving. He saluted Sir Matthew with a very good air, and bowed low and respectfully to the clergyman. He expressed the most unqualified surprise to hear of the lamentable deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Coverley,

and protested that nothing on earth should have induced him to allow a writ of execution to issue could he have imagined the distressed state of the family. He was not aware, he said, that the writ had been issued, until informed by his partner, who had done it in his absence, as their client, Mr. Snatchitt, was obliged, from his own severe necessities, to obtain money at all hazards. He would withdraw it, he said, at once, and with pleasure; but as the writ had been executed, he could not take upon himself that responsibility without consulting his partner in London. He concluded, with strongly recommending that the friends of the family should come forward and relieve the distress by paying the amount.

After this brief conference, Sir Matthew Carlton and the clergyman could no longer doubt that the process was legal, although

they could form no conception of the cause of it, which they attributed to some accident which time would explain. And as the ceremony had already been delayed beyond the appointed time, Mr. Lesley immediately set out for the village, to prepare for the reading of the funeral service, leaving Frank, of whom he took a hasty leave, to follow with Sir Matthew.

Poor Frank was supported, accordingly, to the carriage, occupying, as the only relative, the principal mourning-coach alone; and, followed by Sir Matthew Carlton, the procession began to move.

"Beg pardon," said the bailiff, to the attorney; "but no tricks, eh?" pointing to the family carriage, which was taking part in the procession.

"Egad, I forgot that." And without losing

a moment, the wily man of law, seizing a spare crape hatband with one hand, and with the other displaying a white pocket-handkerchief, caused a momentary stoppage, while he inducted himself into the barouche, in which he edified the spectators by the extreme propriety of his demeanour, and the exhibition of his unaffected sorrow on the melancholy occasion.

Most of the servants had left the house to follow their late master and mistress to the grave, and the place was left in charge of the butler only, who thought it right, under the suspicious circumstances of the two intruders, to remain at his post, to watch their proceedings.

They prowled about the house for a short time till they came to the drawing-room, in which was spread out the customary cake and wine. The man in black eyed the eatables

wistfully, but some feeling held him back, and he contented himself with poking his finger into one of the pieces of the untouched cake; which, after smelling, he mechanically passed over his mouth. Some fragments, which had adhered to his greasy finger, found their way to his palate, and the savoury flavour stimulating those organs of taste, he protruded, like a hungry hound, a tongue resembling a slip of leather, which performed a rapid flourish round his chops, including within its vortex all the stray crumbs in its vicinity.

This was too much for the self-denial of the man of fasts to bear. He first pinched a bit out of the corner of a slice; then broke a slice in half, which he eagerly swallowed; and at last, losing all control over his feelings, he stretched out the lengths of his bony fingers, and made a general grab at a plateful. He

was proceeding to a second glass of wine, when his enjoyment was interrupted by the butler, who, indignant at this profanity committed on the funeral refreshments, suddenly removed them from the table.

"I say, old feller," said the bailiff, who had regarded the proceedings of his satellite with a doubtful air, and as one who was accustomed to have his civility propitiated by the best that the houses to which he paid his visits could afford,—"I say, old feller, haven't you got any grub in the house?"

Old feller! The worthy butler had never been addressed in a manner so disparaging since he was a footboy.

"Grub," he replied, looking with much contempt on the ignoble person of Joe Gripe—"Grub! Yes. Coverley Hall is never without grub, as you call it. But I should think

the servants' hall was the place you're most used to eat it in."

"Oh, anywhere; we're not particular, are we, Tim? But you needn't be coming Captain Grand over us, old feller, 'cause that's no go."

It went much against the grain for the butler to set provisions before the bailiffs, but the habit of the hospitality of Coverley Hall prevailing, he introduced them to an enormous round of beef, which Mr. Gripe was pleased to regard with complacent looks, and at the sight of which the water streamed from the famished chops of the hunger-faced Tim. To this was added a tankard of strong ale.

Tim, chuckling at the plethoric size of the vessel, breathed a long breath, that he might imbibe more largely a draught of the generous liquor; but the proverb of "there's many a slip 'tween the cup and the lip," received

another verification in the instance of the disappointed Tim.

Mr. Gripe, partly from offence at the want of deference to himself which this attempt exhibited, and partly from the apprehension that his deputy would become too much fuddled to exercise the necessary vigilance of his vocation, seized the bottom of the tankard with his brawny fist, and forcibly drew it down from the lips of the thirsting Tim, which vainly followed the brimming ale in its descent.

"No, Tim!—'gainst the rules. You've had two glasses of wine already. Nothing makes a man buzzy, Tim, like ale! And this," taking a long draught himself, and smacking his lips, which were slightly glued together, from the richness of the liquor—"and this stuff is uncommon strong. No, Tim; when a man has 'sponsible duties to perform, like you, Tim—

it's well to remember that ' a clear head makes sharp eyes.' So this," pouring out a miserable modicum of the beer, and handing it to his attendant with his left hand, while he kept fast hold of the tankard with his right—" this is the last pull till supper, that's poz!"

The dolorous Tim, whom repeated mortifications had reduced to a strict submission to the mandates of his superior, and whom his own necessities did not allow him openly to disobey, made a rueful grimace at this authoritative injunction; but without reply, he forthwith proceeded to solace himself with huge slices of the beef, and nothing but the positive exhaustion of his jaws brought his exertions to a close, his appetite remaining, to all appearance, as sharp-set at the end as at the beginning.

This snack, as Joe Gripe called it, being

ended, the butler, disdaining to hold converse with the creatures, though he fed them—the unsatisfied Tim casting a look of poignant regret at the tankard—returned to the hall; and Mr. Gripe, chucking on his white hat, and thrusting his hands into his pockets, with his stick tucked under his arm, posted himself at the window to watch the return of Mr. Skinnom.

CHAPTER XIV.

" He gazed upon those ancient walls;
He looked—but could not speak:
And as he left his father's halls,
He thought his heart would break!

" He shed no tear—he breathed no sigh—
Though sore that heart was riven:
Shrouding his grief from mortal eye,
He placed his trust in Heaven."

OLD TALE.

IT was not until his return from the fulfilment of his pious duties, that Frank became aware of the arrival of the London attorney, and his

attendant myrmidons; and Sir Matthew Carlton and Mr. Lesley found themselves under the necessity of explaining the cause of their unwelcome presence.

"It is with the most sincere regret, sir," said Mr. Skinnom, addressing Frank, in his mildest accents—"it is with sorrow, sir, that I find it impossible to express, that I learnt on my arrival the distressing circumstances—and no one can deplore them with more sorrow than myself—which have occurred in your family; and I am sure, sir, Mr. Huntham, my respectable partner, will feel as I do, when——"

But this specimen of the inimitable blarney of the pathetic Skinnom was cut short by the arrival of a gentleman on horseback, who, from the appearance of the animal covered with foam, had lost no time in attending to the summons of Sir Matthew Carlton.

"Mr. Hartwell—Mr. Skinnom; Mr. Skinnom—Mr. Hartwell."

After excessive bowing on both sides, the matter in hand was briefly explained to Mr. Hartwell, by Mr. Skinnom, with professional technicality.

"Will you let me see the writ?" asked Mr. Hartwell.

The ready Gripe appeared.

"This is all regular enough; and the best thing to do is to get rid of the execution at once. The amount is——"

"Four thousand four hundred and eighty-two pounds odd," replied Skinnom.

"Rather large to produce on the instant. Nothing else, I hope, Mr. Skinnom?"

"This is all on the present *fi-fa*, but there's the mortgage, which of course you're aware of."

"Mortgage!" exclaimed all present, even Frank's attention being roused by this ominous word.

"This is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard," said Sir Matthew Carlton. "Have you any knowledge of this matter, Mr. Lesley?"

"It passes my comprehension," replied the clergyman, looking with concern at Frank.

"Stay a moment," said Frank, a recollection of the bundle of papers, which he had taken from his father's room on that never-to-be-forgotten night, flashing across his mind.

Leaning on Mr. Lesley's arm, he immediately proceeded to his bureau, in which he had deposited the mysterious packet. He broke the seal. A glance at the contents revealed to him the terrible secret of his father's sufferings, and of his own changed state.

He placed it in the hands of Mr. Lesley.

"Can this be real?" said the clergyman; "or was your poor father's mind disordered?"

"It is too true, I fear," said Frank, with singular calmness. "I have no doubt of its truth; other reasons confirm it. My poor mother was at least spared this dreadful blow!"

They requested the presence of Mr. Hartwell. That gentleman—a plain-speaking, but honest and straightforward man—did not hesitate, though with a visible concern, to lay bare the exact state of the case.

"It is best," he said to Mr. Lesley, "however painful, to let young Mr. Coverley know the truth. Mr. Skinnom has communicated to Sir Matthew Carlton and myself, that the late Mr. Coverley mortgaged the estate to

the amount of nearly ninety thousand pounds, and that these people hold for themselves and their client, other securities, in the form of acceptances, to a large amount. It is my duty to tell you," he added, " that Mr. Skinnom has exhibited sufficient documents to convince me—if there is nothing wrong, and nothing irregular appears on the face of them—that the claims for themselves and their clients amount to more than the value of the whole estate, including the total of the personal effects. But of course," Mr. Hartwell observed, " the present Mr. Coverley's legal advisers will enter into a strict investigation of claims so unexpected and so extraordinary."

Frank could not help feeling a sinking of the heart at this information, the general correctness of which he did not dare to doubt,

confirmed as it was by the papers containing his father's confession of the real state of his affairs. He frankly communicated to Mr. Lesley his conviction of the legality of the claims.

"Well, my dear boy, whether it is altogether correct or not," said the good clergyman, "this is not the place for you to stay in after what has occurred. You must take up your abode with me. There is a room vacant, fortunately; and now the sooner we go the better."

Frank gladly acquiesced; Sir Matthew Carlton took his leave; Mr. Hartwell undertook to attend to the legal part of the proceedings at the Hall; and Frank, supported by the clergyman's arm, left his paternal home, which he was never again to enter as its master, and

slowly took his way, across the well-known fields, to the clergyman's cottage.

That night he slept in Clara's bed, and the whirl in his brain became gradually appeased. He rapidly revolved all the events of his young life, his schoolboy days, his father's joyous hospitality, his mother's countenance beaming with kindness and affection, his sports with his early playmate in the happier hours of their infancy—all seemed a dream. But then his thoughts rested on Clara's love, and he repeated to himself her last words in the garden, and recalled her last look by the soft moonlight, when they parted. The mild melancholy which this remembrance raised, soothed his troubled spirits, and he slept.

Before he had retired to rest, he had a con-

versation with his old friend on the sudden change in his prospects.

" You are very kind," said Frank, in reply to the good clergyman's attempts to cheer him, " but I feel too much stunned to be able to think clearly. I have not yet strength of mind to face the difficulties of my future course; but I cannot disguise from myself that I am in the most unfortunate and embarrassing position of all grades in society—that of a poor gentleman without a profession. But still, somehow"—his eyes resting on Clara's drawing materials—" I feel I shall not lose courage."

" I will pray to God," said the clergyman, " to give it to you."

Firm as that young heart was, and confident in its own strength, Frank Coverley would

perhaps have lost his courage that night, could he have foreseen that the present calamity, terrible as it was in its cutting severity, was only the beginning of his many trials.

END OF VOL. I.

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